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President:	Mrs. Haley	(United States of America)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security

Corruption and conflict

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of international peace and security

Corruption and conflict

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. John Prendergast, founding Director of the Enough Project and co-founder of The Sentry, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to warmly welcome His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres, to whom I now give the floor.

The Secretary-General: I thank the United States presidency of the Security Council for organizing this briefing, which reflects a recognition of the importance of tackling corruption as part of our efforts to maintain international peace and security.

Corruption is present in all countries, rich and poor, North and South, developed and developing. Numbers show the startling scope of the challenge. The World Economic Forum estimates that the cost of corruption is at least $2.6 trillion, or 5 per cent, of global gross domestic product. According to the World Bank, businesses and individuals pay more than $1 trillion in bribes each year.

Corruption robs schools, hospitals and others of vitally needed funds. It rots institutions, as public officials enrich themselves or turn a blind eye to criminality. It deprives people of their rights, drives away foreign investment and despoils the environment. Corruption breeds disillusion with Government and governance and is often at the root of political dysfunction and societal disunity. The poor and vulnerable suffer disproportionately, and impunity compounds the problem.

Corruption can be a trigger for conflict. As conflict rages, corruption prospers. Even if conflict ebbs, corruption can impede recovery. Corruption drives and thrives on the breakdown of political and social institutions. Those institutions are never more in crisis than in times of conflict. Corruption is linked to many forms of instability and violence, such as the illicit trafficking in arms, drugs and people.

The connections among corruption, terrorism and violent extremism have been repeatedly recognized by the Security Council and the General Assembly. Assets stolen through corruption can be used to finance further crimes, including violent extremist and terrorist acts.

Large-scale corruption surveys conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime found that bribery of public officials was particularly high in areas affected by conflict. In conflict situations, stakeholders such as anti-corruption commissions, civil society and the media may be weakened or hindered in their essential work.

The consequences of corruption in times of conflict can be especially devastating, as they can affect the most basic needs and exacerbate hunger and poverty.

Member States must be on the front lines in the fight against corruption. It is especially important to build up the capacity of national anti-corruption commissions and prosecutorial efforts. Governments can also enhance anti-corruption efforts by ensuring independent judiciaries, a vibrant civil society, freedom of the media and effective whistle-blower protections. The international community can complement those efforts by working more effectively against money laundering, tax evasion and the illicit financial flows that deprive countries of much-needed resources and fuel further corruption.

As members of the Council know, I have called for heightened efforts to prevent conflict and to address risks early, before they escalate. In that spirit, combating corruption and addressing governance challenges, which lie at the root of many conflicts, must be a component of preventive approaches. This is an opportunity to build a solid foundation of trust and accountability and increase a society's resilience to crisis.

In peace operations, our engagement should be designed and implemented with a clearer anti-corruption lens to reinforce a culture of accountability and respect for the rule of law. At its January Summit this year, the African Union launched the observance of 2018 as African Anti-Corruption Year. I am pleased to note that anti-money laundering efforts in Nigeria and Tunisia have seen funds returned.

As I said to the General Assembly in May in marking the fifteenth anniversary of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, the role of the United Nations is crucial. There are several ways the Organization can support Member States, from sharing good practices to supporting efforts to strengthen national anti-corruption institutions. The International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala is a case in point.

Before the adoption of the Convention, there was no global instrument to criminalize corruption or to recover stolen proceeds. Now the Convention has 186 States parties and the crime of corruption is on the books of nearly every country in the world. The Convention's robust peer review mechanisms have served as a global framework for international cooperation to strengthen prevention, disrupt money-laundering schemes, return stolen proceeds from foreign banks and other necessary actions. I encourage all Member States to bring greater resolve to its implementation.

Let us also take profit of advances of technology, which give us an opportunity to massively expand public participation in governance and to increase accountability. At the same time, we know that conventions and legal measures must be complemented by strong leadership that elevates corruption as a concern and makes it a priority for action.

People across the world continue to express outrage at the corruption of their leaders and at how deeply corruption is embedded in societies. They are rightly calling for political establishments to operate with transparency and accountability or to make way for those who will. I call on leaders everywhere to listen, to nurture a culture of integrity and to empower citizens to do their part at the grass-roots level. We must all do more to fight corruption, strengthen governance and build trustworthy institutions that can ensure probity and progress for all.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Prendergast.

Mr. Prendergast: Throughout history, war may have been hell, but for small groups of conflict profiteers it has also been very lucrative. Today's deadliest conflicts in Africa — such as those in South Sudan, Somalia, northern Nigeria, the Sudan, the Central African Republic and, perhaps most importantly, the Democratic Republic of Congo — are sustained by extraordinary opportunities for illicit self-enrichment that emerge in war economies, where there is a visible nexus between grand corruption and mass atrocities. State armies and rebels use extreme violence to control natural resources, labour and smuggling networks, including those trafficking in wildlife. Violence becomes self-financing from pillaging, natural-resource looting and stealing State assets, with banking and business connections that extend from right here in New York to London, Dubai and many other global financial centres.

In these hijacked African States, the dynamics of which are certainly similar to those in other war-torn countries around the world, such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, military and civilian leaders use networks of commercial collaborators and financiers from inside and outside their countries to enrich themselves, to benefit the commercial and political networks, and usually to maintain an iron grip on power. Arms dealers, ivory traffickers, gold and diamond smugglers, minerals dealers, oil companies, construction firms and others collude with Government officials and rebel warlords — as well as, at times, with terrorist networks — to maximize profit for a narrow few. Technically savvy and skilled at exploiting legitimate systems of finance, trade and transport — utilizing money-laundering, regulatory and sanctions evasion, disguised beneficial ownership, the diversion of State resources and assets, security sector fraud, and offshoring assets — these networks have remained largely untouched by law enforcement, regulation or international sanctions imposed by this organ or others.

At their core, these conflicts are battles over the control of hijacked States and the natural resources that enrich the countries involved. Control of the State is the surest way to access these resources. Diverting State budgets into the military and internal security — the primary means of violently suppressing dissent — is how to secure them.

Until the Security Council and other interested parties with potential influence can create leverage to change these dynamics, the bottom line is that war will remain more beneficial than peace for those at the centre of conflict and corruption. The same people benefiting from war economies are often the power-brokers in peace talks and have limited incentive — in fact, sometimes no incentive — to reach and implement

a negotiated settlement, especially if adhering to such an agreement means losing out economically.

Therefore, peace efforts require an emphasis on conflict transformation, where war economies must be dismantled and hijacked State institutions, which have often been predatory dating back to the colonial period, must be completely reformed to fulfil their intended purpose. This is even more difficult in countries where natural resources have provided huge opportunities for plunder and corruption to people all over the world.

Remarkably, and regrettably, there is currently no coordinated strategy to disrupt the illicit siphoning of money by leaders and their foreign business partners, or to break the link between corruption and conflict. Every year, billions of aid dollars pour into Africa to clean up these horrific messes. United Nations agencies, taxpayers and donor Governments around the world fund peacekeeping forces, State-building programmes, humanitarian assistance, elections and peace processes, but none of this support has been able to keep corrupt leaders and their network of beneficiaries from stealing billions of dollars because the diplomats leading these efforts simply have no leverage to change the systems that perpetuate conflict. This is not about regime change. It is about system change.

For years, the tool of choice for building leverage against actors undermining peace or human rights has been to impose targeted sanctions. But the sanctions often imposed by this organ and many Member States in these situations, especially in Africa, have been inadequate. Too few individuals are sanctioned too infrequently. The sanctions are often too weak, because the mandate does not exist to target those responsible for the corruption that leads to conflict. In other words, we rarely sanction those at the centre of the networks responsible for greed-fueled extreme violence and their commercial collaborators. Over time, and in the absence of meaningful enforcement, warring parties have come to regard these kinds of erratically applied, one-off sanctions as a vague annoyance for their public relations rather than as a serious threat to their power.

What is missing is the use of policy tools of financial pressures that actually alter the cost-benefit analysis of those committing atrocities and prolonging war. As is obvious, these leaders and their commercial collaborators do not keep their money under the mattress; rather, they launder it through the international financial system and move it offshore into real estate, shell or front companies, and bank accounts. That makes them vulnerable. As a result, the leverage must be laser-focused on going after this specific illicit activity, valued in the billions of dollars. If that activity is disrupted and the vulnerabilities of these kleptocratic networks are exposed and attacked, only then will United Nations envoys and other diplomats be in a position to actually make progress towards brokering and supporting the implementation of peace agreements that lead to lasting peace and that benefit long-suffering populations.

The policy tools available to the Security Council and other interested parties are threefold: first, a network-focused approach to sanctions that focuses on grand corruption; secondly, anti-money-laundering measures that focus on the illicit movement of money through the international financial system; and thirdly, as the Secretary-General said, prosecutions that, in this case, focus on financial crimes associated with atrocities.

Let us go to the first one. Sanctions must be levied against entire networks, not just individuals. That is the approach that the Security Council and others took to propel Iran and North Korea to the negotiating table. Sanctions that target networks in this way are powerful tools for changing behaviour and pressuring individuals to compromise. These network sanctions work because they affect not only the primary target of the sanctions themselves, but also the individuals and companies that play an important role in supporting the targets' activities. By sanctioning the individuals and entities all at once or in close succession, and ensuring robust enforcement, which is key, the primary target's network does not have enough time to recover from the financial impact of being cut off from the global financial system.

To implement this, the Council should add "corruption tied to conflict" as a sanctions criterion to its existing sanctions programmes and ensure that panels of experts are mandated to report on corruption related to conflict. Panels of experts must be provided with the support they need to do this work, which includes ensuring accountability for those responsible for the tragic deaths of Michael Sharp and Zaida Catalán.

Secondly, the Council should enhance its engagement with anti-money-laundering bodies, such as the Financial Action Task Force and similar regional bodies, and ensure that sanctions regimes

include references to the importance of combatting the laundering of corruption proceeds. These organizations need the help of the Security Council to bolster their work.

An important component of any effort to strengthen the Security Council's ability to counter corrupt activities that fuel conflict more effective is to move beyond working with Governments alone. The Council could enhance its leverage considerably by expanding its outreach and engagement with banks and other financial institutions to counter corruption-fueled conflict. Certain elements of the private sector could them become allies in support of these objectives.

Thirdly and finally, courts must have the mandate to prosecute financial crimes, particularly those rooted in corruption, when connected to conflict and atrocities. The International Criminal Court and other courts of special jurisdiction, such as the Special Criminal Court for the Central African Republic or the Hybrid Court in South Sudan, must have the authority to prosecute these financial crimes.

Ultimately, these tools of financial pressure are not an end in themselves, but should be deployed, as the Secretary-General said today, in the context of a comprehensive strategy that intensifies diplomacy, supports Government institutions of accountability and transparency, and gives space to civil society efforts to promote human rights and reconciliation. As it stands now — and this is the kicker — war crimes pay. In order for peace to have any chance, those benefiting from the human misery wrought by conflicts around the world need to pay a price, whether financial, legal or political, and the corrupt systems that underlie them need to be ended.

I thank you, Madam President, for inviting me to speak today and for bringing attention to this critical issue. I also thank all Security Council members for considering a more robust action plan for countering the corruption-fueled conflict that is destroying the lives of millions of people around the world today.

The President: I thank Mr. Prendergast for his statement.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States.

I thank Secretary-General Guterres for being here today and shining a light on the link between corruption and international peace and security.

I also thank John Prendergast for telling us about the important work his team does to uncover the ways that corruption fuels conflict and for giving us clear recommendations on what we can do to stop it.

I thank everyone for being here for this, the first Security Council meeting on the relationship between corruption and conflict. This is an issue that has for too long gone unaddressed. For all the time we spend here discussing conflict, we hardly ever talk about how corruption fuels the instability, violence and criminal activity that put countries on our agenda. We pour billions and billions of dollars into trying to fix these problems. We deploy Blue Helmets. We set up massive assistance missions. We send experts to all corners of the globe. But we fail to recognize the issue that is staring us in the face — corruption.

At its core, corruption is the transfer of wealth from the powerless to the powerful. Bribes, insider deals, the skimming of public funds and the diversion of humanitarian aid — these are all forms of the involuntary tribute the poorest pay to the powerful and corrupt regimes. When the weight of this burden becomes too much for the people to endure, they inevitably react. Corruption also allows transnational crime and drug trafficking to flourish, threatening the health and safety of all of us. The resulting instability and outflows of desperate people demonstrate that corruption is not just an internal matter; it is a regional and global concern for all of us.

On 17 December 2010, a humble Tunisian fruit seller sat down in front of the local governor's office, dowsed himself in paint thinner and set himself on fire. Mohamed Bouazizi's desperate act set off the Arab Spring and made him the face of protest against authoritarian Governments. What is often lost in his story is that Mohamed was driven to publicly and painfully kill himself by corruption. Like other poor street vendors in Tunisia, Mohamed was routinely harassed by officials seeking bribes. Hours before his suicide, he had experienced yet another humiliating shakedown by a local police officer. Perhaps hoping that others would understand his plight, Mohamed committed one final act of protest against the system that was robbing him not only of his livelihood but of his dignity.

Mohamed's action sparked a wave of anti-corruption uprising across the Arab world. Governments that had appeared stable for decades fell within weeks. In

Yemen, Syria and Libya, protest quickly spiraled into conflicts as corrupt leaders and their cronies tried to hang on to power. All of this unrest eventually found its way to the Security Council's agenda. In fact, nine out of the ten countries that Transparency International considers to be the most corrupt in the world are on the Security Council agenda — nine out of ten. But instead of reflecting on why this is the case, the United Nations is too often willing to ignore corruption. We fear that addressing it will put off Governments and shut off cooperation, or we regard corruption as just the cost of doing business in some countries.

But this head-in-the-sand approach is backwards. In the most troubled countries in the world, corruption is not simply part of the system; corruption is the system. Governments in places like Venezuela and Iran do not exist to serve their people and happen to do a little corruption on the side; they exist to serve their own interests and corruption is the means by which they do so.

The fact is that corrupt regimes cannot be ignored, wished away or dealt with quietly or with whispers. If the Security Council is going to deliver on its commitment to peace and security, corruption must be addressed. Examples of corruption leading to conflict are all around us. The estimates of how much the corrupt Government of Viktor Yanukovych stole from the Ukrainian people run as high as $100 billion over the course of less than four years. His lavish lifestyle was legendary and greatly resented by the Ukrainian people. And when Yanukovych was eventually ousted for his crimes, the ripple effects were global. Russia occupied Crimea and began the most serious confrontation between Moscow and the West since the Cold War.

Corruption also fuels terrorist movements. Citizens who watch Government insiders get rich by stealing resources or demanding brides are ripe for recruitment by terrorists. Boko Haram gained power and support in Nigeria largely in opposition to Government corruption and oppression. The first targets of its violent attacks were the police stations that housed Nigeria's notoriously corrupt and abusive police force. And as Boko Haram carried out barbaric attacks that killed thousands, Nigeria's leaders stole countless amounts of money to defeat terrorism. Since then, Nigeria has taken real steps towards reform, and we commend the Government for recognizing the need for change.

Corruption sustains and prolongs conflict. The ethnic divisions in South Sudan are real, but the driving source of the conflict is a fight over who will control South Sudan's oil revenues, as we heard earlier today. Until there is a way to transparently distribute natural resources in a way that is seen as fair by the South Sudanese people, the civil war will go on. Elsewhere in Africa, groups exploit natural resources, even trafficking in wildlife to pay for war.

Corruption is also an international problem because looted funds are laundered through the global financial system. More than any other country, the United States has taken action to stop this. Through the Kleptocracy Initiative, the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, and the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, we have shut down corrupt actors involved in drug trafficking, arms trafficking, and money-laundering.

In countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nicaragua and Venezuela, where corruption has fuelled conflict or prevented its resolution, the United States Treasury has levelled significant sanctions. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Treasury used the Global Magnitsky authority to sanction businessman Dan Gertler, one associated individual and 33 entities for corruption related to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In Venezuela, the United States Treasury has imposed targeted sanctions on Government officials to stop them from moving their stolen assets in the international financial system. And we have gone the extra mile to ensure that our sanctions are aimed directly at the Maduro regime and not at the Venezuelan people. Later today, the United States will host an Arria Formula meeting that will focus specifically on the toll that corruption in Venezuela has taken on its people and how it threatens international security. We welcome all Member States to join us at the meeting.

Last year during the United States presidency, we demonstrated that human rights is an issue of peace and security. This year, we make the same argument for the Council's time and attention on the issue of corruption. By the time a person like Mohamed Bouazizi is moved to lash out against his oppressors, it is too late to prevent corruption from becoming a full-fledged threat to international peace and security.

To those of my colleagues who are serious about fulfilling their duties as members of the Security

Council, I urge that we take a longer view. If we fail to take seriously the issue of corruption now, we will doom ourselves to deal with the violence it creates in the future.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to Council members who wish to make statements.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I want to thank you, Madam President, for putting this very important issue on the Council's agenda today. I want to thank the Secretary-General for his insightful words.

I also want to thank Mr. Prendergast. I was very interested in what he had to say about the three primary issues that need to be addressed, about how sanctions need to be extended to networks and about system change. As the Council considers some of the issues before it, I hope we will be able to follow some of his prescriptions and debate how we can more productively tackle corruption.

Corruption is pervasive. We agree with those who spoken so far that it causes and exacerbates conflict. But even more importantly, it is a major obstacle to economic growth and poverty alleviation. It is a subterranean current that perniciously undercuts efforts at peace, reconciliation and community rebuilding, and in many cases it causes those efforts to collapse.

From my own experience in Kabul, I know what it does to the willingness of individuals to go along with Governments trying to do the right thing when they see lower-level officials trying to shake them down for the most basic human services. Losses from corruption total some $1 trillion dollars a year. Corruption holds back economic development, it undermines the provision of public services and it stokes grievances and, ultimately, conflict. Kofi Annan, in 2003, called it an "insidious plague" (*A/58/PV.50, p. 12*).

The links between conflict and corruption are well established. We heard some examples of that today. In Syria, we have seen how a corrupt Government can generate grievances that lead to discontent and then to violence and then to conflict. In the Balkans, much ethnic tension has been fuelled by leaders not living up to their responsibilities. Studies of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Iraq, Nigeria and Afghanistan show how, once a conflict begins, it creates even more opportunities for bribery and other corrupt practices. That, in turn, undermines the rule of law, which fuels further conflict. Terrorist groups, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham or Al-Qaida, take advantage of corruption both to fund their operations and to attract recruits and promote their ideology.

No country is immune from corruption, and I include my own country. The fight against corruption therefore needs to begin in our capitals. I would like to highlight three steps that the United Kingdom has taken recently to strengthen our own defences. In 2017, we passed the Criminal Finances Act, which establishes new anti-corruption tools, such as unexplained wealth orders. This year, we announced that we would establish a public register listing the beneficial ownership of overseas companies, including in our overseas territories. That will help ensure that the United Kingdom is not used as a refuge by corrupt leaders, businessmen and officials. We have also established the National Economic Crime Centre, hosted by our National Crime Agency to task, and coordinate our overall law enforcement response.

But in today's interconnected world, as we have heard, it is vital that there be a properly coordinated international response. We are a very strong supporter of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, and I would like to take this opportunity to urge all the countries that have not ratified the Convention to do so because it provides an excellent international framework to guide collective efforts. Fifteen years after its adoption by the General Assembly (resolution 58/4), we need to ensure that we maintain our momentum and focus on implementation and that the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly all ensure that their efforts in that regard are mutually reinforcing.

In 2016, we hosted an anti-corruption summit in London in the hope of stepping up global action. One of the most important outcomes of the summit, we believe, was the establishment of the International Anti-Corruption Coordination Centre. It brings together specialist law-enforcement officers from six countries to trace the assets and individuals involved in cases of grand corruption.

Asset recovery is a critical part of efforts to tackle corruption and a fundamental principle of the Convention against Corruption. In 2017, we co-hosted the first Global Forum on Asset Recovery with the

United States, the World Bank and UNODC. The Forum helped to move forward arrangements for returning stolen assets of more than $300 million to Nigeria. The Convention, in chapter VI, highlights the importance of technical assistance and information exchange. The United Kingdom is proud to be working in partnership with several countries to share best practices and develop capacities. In Nigeria, we provide technical assistance and equipment to key agencies fighting international and domestic financial and economic crime, and we work to raise public awareness of corruption.

In conclusion, the United Kingdom will continue to support a concerted international response to end impunity for those engaged in corruption, to recover stolen assets and to empower citizens to stand up to and report corruption. That, in turn, will help prevent and resolve conflict. The United Nations has a crucial role to play in that response. We hope that all Member States will work together in order to get the better of corrupt leaders, businessmen and officials and ensure that there is no safe haven.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to thank the United States for having taken the initiative of convening this unprecedented meeting of the Security Council on the fight against corruption in conflict situations. We also warmly thank Secretary-General António Guterres and Mr. Prendergast for their illuminating briefings.

Corruption is both a consequence of instability and conflict and an important factor in exacerbating them. The Council is therefore the appropriate forum to address this issue, but we must do so in a pragmatic, operational and non-ideological manner.

In addition to significantly weakening institutions that safeguard the rule of law, corruption leads to drastic economic disparity and promotes organized crime and the financing of terrorism. It thereby undermines the security and the political, economic and social development of affected States. In that regard, it can be an obstacle to international peace and security, particularly in countries in conflict or post-conflict situations, which often suffer a lack of institutions or weak institutions. Those countries, already vulnerable, are often the first victims of the ravages of corruption, which affects the stability of the State, the security of its citizens and the future of the country.

Beyond the threat it poses to peace, corruption is a major obstacle to development. Free of all ideology, France's pragmatic approach helps us to us see corruption as a threat to peace and development. It is an insidious evil that rots them both. Conversely, good governance — that is, a legal and institutional environment that promotes transparency and accountability — is a necessary condition for peacebuilding and development.

In that context, it is absolutely essential that the international community remain fully engaged in the fight against corruption at all levels — national, regional and international. Fifteen years after its adoption, the United Nations Convention against Corruption remains the only universal instrument and a pillar of the international fight against corruption. France reiterates its call for the strict implementation of the Convention by all States, in particular through its review mechanism, which helps to ensure the effective monitoring of the application of the Convention.

In that framework, each State has a responsibility and duty to act to put an end to corruption. Since we are here to share best practices, let me briefly share France's experience. We have considerably strengthened our anti-corruption powers by mobilizing public authorities, economic actors and civil society, who are closer to the field and promote innovative initiatives. To prevent and effectively fight corruption, non-State actors, who have essential expertise and links on the ground, play a major role. It is therefore important to implement joint strategies that bring together States, civil society and the private sector. That is the key to success.Those avenues are part and parcel of the assessment to which France was subjected this year as part of the second review cycle of the Convention against Corruption.

In order to effectively fight corruption, economic transparency is also essential. That is why in 2016 France adopted a law on transparency, the fight against corruption and the modernization of the economy. That law also created the French anti-corruption agency that is responsible for drawing up recommendations on the prevention of and assistance in detecting corruption for public and economic actors, as well as a national plan for the prevention of corruption. We encourage all States to establish robust national mechanisms to prevent and combat corruption.

Beyond the national level, regional and international organizations also have a central role to play in contributing to anti-corruption efforts and in supporting States that express a need for them. In

Europe, for example, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Council of Europe have developed particularly relevant regional legal instruments. The Group of 20 also has an anti-corruption working group, which France is co-chairing with Argentina until the end of this year.

Finally, I would like to highlight the key role of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) as the guarantor of the Convention against Corruption. The UNODC undertakes many anti-corruption activities, including the facilitation of the review mechanism and technical assistance activities — for example, training workshops for judges and prosecutors or assistance in the drafting of legislative documents — in order to help States implement their international obligations in that area. We encourage all Member States to support the important work of the UNODC in that regard.

Let me conclude by stressing the importance of international cooperation in the fight against corruption, in particular in order to learn from the best practices already in place. France thus fully supports the Open Government Partnership, which we co-chaired in 2016. That initiative, which seeks to increase the openness of public data and civic participation in public decision-making and is now comprised of more than 70 countries from all continents, is a formidable tool for preventing corruption risks. We hope that as many States as possible will join those efforts, and on behalf of France, I would like to once again make an appeal to that end.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): We thank the United States presidency for the opportunity to discuss how corruption fuels conflicts. As for us, we stand for a system-wide coordination to improve the interlinkages between development and security, in particular in the regional context. It is from that angle that we see added value in scrutinizing that phenomenon as a consequence of conflict, with development drivers.

We express appreciation to Secretary-General Guterres and the founding Director of the Enough Project and co-founder of The Sentry, Mr. Prendergast, for their comprehensive and insightful briefings.

My delegation would like to make the following observations on some key points.

First, my country has its own experience in fighting various threats to peace and security at the national, regional and global levels. In that vein, we intend to make every effort to support our common commitment to preventing and controlling corruption so as to ensure peace. Transparency, the rule of law, good governance and accountability are the ways to root out corruption. That is true for pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict societies. Our experience shows that more engagement of countries in the international system of relations and transactions, rather than less, helps to avoid corruptive practices. Isolation plays the opposite role, fuelling negative tendencies in national and international development.

Secondly, today's world clearly testifies to the fact that there are interlinkages between development and security. We are confronted today by protracted conflicts with complex political instability and tensions that defy our interventions. To address them, we need to assess the alarming intensity and proportions assumed by problems such as terrorism, armed groups, transnational crime, the exploitation of natural resources and historical legacies and trafficking in drugs, weapons and human beings, and to identify how corruption permeates all of them.

On the other hand, corruption is also triggered by insecurities caused by development-related root causes: deep poverty arising from climate change; food, water and energy insecurities; and large inflows of money for capacity-building and development aid. As such, in order to attain sustainable peace, including through engagement on conflict prevention and peacebuilding, we need to promote a threefold strategy by, inter alia, creating the potential for the close, complex, multifaceted and case-specific relationship between security and development, utilizing an innovative and revamped regional approach, and strengthening coordination within the United Nations to increase its effectiveness and ensure greater transparency and accountability.

Thirdly, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development identifies an explicit link between corruption and peaceful, just and inclusive societies. One of the most important commitments in the Agenda is to leave no one behind in the delivery of services, decision-making and the dispensation of justice. Achieving that ambitious goal will not be possible without tackling corruption in all its forms.

To conclude, my country firmly believes that the efforts of individual country have to be complemented by future actions conducted in unity. It is critically

important to build an environment of sustainable peace and resilient development for all. However, when we speak about the ways that the Security Council's sanction regimes and resolutions could lower the probability of conflict affected by corruption, we have to also bear in mind that the effect is yet to be thoroughly studied.

Lastly, we believe that the United Nations and its main organs have a crucial role to play in addressing that phenomenon, which triggers conflicts and impedes the post-conflict recovering process.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation thanks the United States presidency for holding this briefing on corruption and conflict. It also welcomes the presence of Secretary-General António Guterres, whose relevant analysis shed light on the acuity of corruption and its correlation with conflicts around the world. My delegation also thanks Mr. John Prendergast, founding Director of the Enough Project, for his briefing.

There is no doubt that corruption is one of the main causes of conflict, and it seems to be one of the most complex challenges facing our States. Corruption is morally and legally reprehensible and can create a fertile breeding ground for social unrest and give rise to new forms of violence, which can lead to conflicts that undermine the mechanisms for managing and distributing national wealth. When it reaches endemic proportions, corruption can undermine the foundations of a modern State that aspires to peace, development and shared prosperity through its impact on the values of transparency, integrity, morality and justice.

Corruption is a gangrene that is rotting State institutions by undermining their ability to carry out their sovereign functions and thereby represents a source of instability and conflict. In that regard, my delegation would like to focus its statement on administrative, judicial and security institutions, three areas that are emblematic of the challenges that corruption poses to States. Indeed, in many countries, corruption in administrative institutions has a negative impact on their effectiveness and fairness, in particular in how they serve their clients, which leads to frustrations that are factors in social conflicts. As a result, such institutions often lose all credibility in collective perceptions and thus struggle to establish themselves as places of civic equality.

Judicial institutions are equally susceptible, as they are supposed to guarantee the equality of citizens before the law, contribute to the control of democratic and economic governance, and ensure the implementation of accountability.

With regard to the corruption of security institutions, which are tools for protecting people and defending national territory, it represents a break in the pact of trust with civilians and another source of social tensions. Those institutions struggle to effectively control borders and to resolutely combat trafficking of all kinds, in particular drug trafficking and trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

In the light of corruption's enormous potential for harm and its ability to undermine the foundations of States, in particular those in post-crisis situations, African leaders declared 2018 the African Anti-Corruption Year, with the theme: "Winning the Fight against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Africa's Transformation". In doing so, they intend to demonstrate their collective commitment and determination to combating that scourge.

In that connection, the African Union Peace and Security Council, at its 764th meeting held on 12 April, stressed the need for greater integration of the African governance architecture within the framework of structural conflict prevention, while anchoring the African anti-corruption strategy within a global perspective. Indeed, as described earlier, corruption appears to be a major obstacle to good governance, may lead to large economic disparities, fuels organized crime and represents an obstacle to democracy. It therefore creates the conditions for destabilizing States, while endangering peace and security at the local, regional and international levels.

That is why, in the final statement of the thirty-first ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State of the African Union, held on 1 and 2 July in Nouakchott, emphasis was placed on strengthening South-South cooperation through the voluntary exchange of information, mutual legal assistance and the sharing of best practices among anti-corruption agencies; combating illicit financial flows through such measures as the provision of financial information on a country-by-country basis; and investment in demographic dividends through education and awareness campaigns for young people in the fight against corruption. Those measures require genuine ownership to be taken at the

local level in the fight against corruption, with a view to sharing experiences for greater effectiveness on the African continent.

We must also recall that the consequences of corruption are more pronounced in post-conflict countries, which are already affected by the absence or weakness of State institutions and the scarcity of financial resources. In that context, corruption can have destabilizing effects on the process of building and sustaining peace and even increases the likelihood of the resumption of hostilities. In order to break the vicious cycle that leads to increasingly inextricable situations in post-conflict countries, some practical measures could be considered to limit the corrosive effects of corruption on their stability and development. Those could include, among others, explicitly including the anti-corruption dimension in peace agreements; ensuring that anti-corruption interventions start in the immediate aftermath of conflict and take into account the context and relevant capacities existing in countries; strengthening collaboration with civil society and supporting its efforts to combat corruption.

As part of its peacebuilding strategy, and aware of the fact that corruption can be a potential factor in the resurgence of conflicts, Côte d'Ivoire has been working to strengthen its legislative and institutional framework to combat that scourge. On 16 April 2014, it set up the High Authority for Good Governance, which is responsible, among other tasks, for drawing up and implementing the national anti-corruption strategy, monitoring the implementation of prevention policies and the fight against corruption, and international cooperation in that field.

My country has also strengthened the capacity of its National Financial Information Processing Unit, which is responsible for combating illegal financial transactions and money-laundering. It has also updated and strengthened the texts governing the Central Public Procurement Department in order to make public procurement even more open and transparent. The pursuit of institutional reforms has also been marked by the expansion of the auditing powers of the Court of Auditors, in order to track and repress the embezzlement of public funds by high-ranking officials and to closely review the management of those funds. That institutional overhaul should make it possible to stem the loss of public funds and to pursue the establishment of a council of State and a court of appeal.

My country is deeply convinced that combating corruption is a matter of national, regional and international peace and security. We therefore support not only the preventive approach advocated by the Secretary-General, but also the need to promote international cooperation, including the sharing of experiences and good practices, in the fight against corruption.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing. We listened to the statements made by Mr. Prendergast.

The maintenance of international peace and security is an important purpose of the Charter of the United Nations and the primary responsibility of the Security Council, as entrusted by the Charter. Nowadays, complex factors are at play throughout world, the emergence of regional hotspot issues is increasing, and traditional and non-traditional security challenges are intertwined. Against that background, the international community should act in concert to prevent and resolve conflicts in order to build long-lasting peace and universal security.

First, it is important to adhere to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and settle disputes by peaceful means. Sovereign equality, the peaceful settlement of disputes and non-interference in the internal affairs of States are the basic principles that guide international affairs. Countries must develop equal partnerships through consultation and mutual understanding. All parties to conflict must insist on consultations on an equal basis and resolve their differences through peaceful means, such as dialogue and negotiations. The mechanisms and means of addressing matters of international peace and security must be further refined in order to better resolve conflicts, defuse tensions and eliminate wars and conflicts.

Secondly, both the symptoms and the root causes of conflicts must be tackled. The international community should focus on addressing the root causes of conflict, such as poverty and underdevelopment, in an effort to comprehensively promote the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, strengthen global development partnerships, honour assistance commitments and help developing countries improve the livelihood of their people, exploring development paths that suit their national conditions and helping them to enhance their own capabilities for development.

"We should promote development through peace and consolidate peace through development so that people in conflict areas can enjoy the peace dividends as soon as possible.

Thirdly, it is important to build a new international peace and security partnership featuring cooperation and win-win outcomes. All parties should establish a new vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, and respond to challenges in the area of international peace and security in a mutually beneficial manner. The Security Council should play a central role in the collective security mechanism and work side by side and in a coordinated manner with the relevant United Nations agencies to establish synergies. Regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union, enjoy advantages in terms of shared geography, history and culture, and should therefore play important roles in maintaining peace and security in the region.

China is a builder and defender of world peace and actively participates in United Nations peacekeeping operations and mediation activities related to international and regional hotspot issues, while advocating the settlement of disputes through dialogue and negotiations. We firmly uphold the basic norms of international relations based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and promote international relations that are mutually respectful, fair, just and characterized by cooperation and win-win outcomes. The Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation was successfully held on 3 and 4 September. Leaders of China and Africa announced new measures to strengthen comprehensive cooperation between China and Africa around the theme "Towards an even stronger China-Africa community with a shared future" through win-win cooperation. Eight major initiatives have been identified for the next three years and beyond.

In the area of peace and security, China has decided to establish a China-Africa peace and security cooperation fund to support peace and security and stability in Central Africa, while continuing to provide free military aid and assistance to the African Union. We support national and regional efforts, including in the regions of the Sahel, the Gulf of Aden and the Gulf of Guinea, to maintain regional security and support counter-terrorism efforts.

The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation has been established to provide a platform for China and Africa to strengthen exchanges in the area of peace and security. We are making efforts to promote the implementation of 50 security assistance projects, including the Belt and Road Initiative, social security, United Nations peacekeeping, combating piracy and counter-terrorism. Within the United Nations framework, we will continue to actively participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa and to mobilize the international community to strengthen support for the African Standby Force and build rapid-reaction forces to respond to crises. China will continue to work with the international community, adhere to multilateralism and support the United Nations in playing a central role in making greater contributions to the maintenance of international peace and security.

This year marks the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. Corruption is the common enemy of humankind. Substantially reducing corruption and bribery in all their forms and strengthening the recovery and return of stolen assets are included as targets in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The international community needs to strengthen cooperation, resolutely fight corruption and prevent gaps and loopholes that could be used to the benefit of corrupt actors. China is a party to the Convention against Corruption and actively participates in the relevant discussions in the General Assembly and other relevant mechanisms to support the United Nations role as the main cooperative channel to combat corruption. China stands ready to work with Governments and the relevant international agencies to continuously contribute to deepening international cooperation to counter corruption.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands): I thank the Secretary-General and Mr. Prendergast for their briefings.

The United Nations Convention against Corruption stresses that corruption undermines the institutions and values of democracy, ethical values and justice. Given those undermining effects, it is remarkable that the Security Council has never discussed corruption before. I therefore commend you, Madam President, for putting this issue on the agenda today.

In my intervention, I would like to focus on three aspects: the rule of law, accountability and sustainable development.

The rule of law forms the basis of stable societies, democracy and the trust that citizens place in their Government. If the rule of law is the medicine for stability, then corruption is the virus that breeds conflict. The report of the United Nations Development Programme, entitled *Journey to Extremism in Africa*, tells us how corrupt and ill-performing Governments push people into the hands of violent extremists, and Mr. Prendergast's organization has highlighted how actors engaged in illegal economic activities driven by corruption have an interest in perpetuating conflict. At the same time, reliable, corrupt-free Governments have proven to be a source of resilience. Let us therefore step up our efforts to strengthen the rule of law, build capacity and create strong State institutions that truly serve citizens.

This brings me to my second point — accountability. Accountable State institutions are strong State institutions. Accountability requires the separation of powers, checks and balances and judicial follow-up. I would like to thank Mr. Prendergast for his concrete suggestions in that regard, which are worth looking into. It requiresnot only the separation of powers, checks and balances and judicial follow-up; it also requires transparency. For that reason, the Kingdom of the Netherlands supports Transparency International. The annual Corruption Perceptions Index of Transparency International shows that corruption and conflict correlate. It also shows that corruption diminishes when there are structures in place for citizens to hold their Government to account.

The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) is worth mentioning as well. The EITI standard requires Governments to publish information on their natural resources management, including on where related tax money ends up. The EITI gives an informed voice to the people, and the Kingdom of the Netherlands has been a proud supporter of the Initiative since its inception because it is clear to us that internal oversight mechanisms, as well as external oversight mechanisms run by civil society, businesses and independent auditors, are key to holding State institutions to account.

Lastly, with regard to my third point, sustainable development, the sustaining peace agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are our most comprehensive responses to conflict prevention. Corruption, however, undermines their implementation. It deprives those who are most marginalized of access to vital services. Corruption diminishes tax revenues and fuels grievances and discontent. Corruption raises the cost of sustainable development. Tackling corruption is vital to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 16, on peace, justice and strong institutions. Tackling corruption is vital to sustainable development, and thus to global security.

In conclusion, today the Security Council has taken a first and important step to address corruption and its link to conflict. For the Council to take further steps, we call on the Secretary-General to highlight the issue more explicitly in his future reports and briefings. In his foreword to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime publication of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, the late former Secretary-General Kofi Annan wrote that corruption "is found in all countries — big and small, rich and poor". Let the disruptive consequences of corruption that all our countries face unite us in our efforts to tackle that evil phenomenon once and for all.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his briefing earlier this morning and to Mr. John Prendergast for his account of how corruption affects societies and drives conflict and for his concrete recommendations to the Security Council.

The Security Council's mandate to maintain international peace and security, prevent conflicts and address their root causes makes the topic of corruption highly relevant to its work. We therefore welcome today's discussion, especially as it places significant emphasis on prevention and sustaining peace.

Corruption can be defined as the abuse of power and trust for private gain. It affects all countries, does not recognize boundaries and can spread through all levels of public agencies. Corruption cuts across entire populations but hits the most disempowered members of society the hardest. Women are often more at risk of suffering the consequences of corruption. That is because they tend to have weaker access to services and are also at higher risk for sexual extortion and physical abuse. We recognize how corruption contributes to the destabilization of fragile States and is ultimately one of the drivers of conflict. The recent United Nations and World Bank study *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*

also mentions corruption as an underlying source for conflict and violence. In contrast, when people trust their service providers, institutions, Governments and elected officials, the path to stable societies is firmer. Knowing that everyone is treated equally gives the most disempowered in particular a sense of belonging and security, while offering better opportunities to end the cycles of violence that are the result of political exclusion.

Our multilateral efforts have produced strong political commitments to supporting anti-corruption initiatives. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially Goal 16, on stronger institutions, and Goal 10, on reducing inequality within and among countries, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the United Nations Convention against Corruption are important foundations for those commitments. The peacebuilding and sustaining peace agendas of the United Nations are also directly relevant to the fight against corruption. Resolution 2282 (2016), on sustaining peace, stresses the importance of strengthening the rule of law and promoting accountability, good governance and gender equality. It also highlights the need to respect and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. Addressing corruption is part and parcel of honouring those commitments.

Anti-corruption efforts are a high priority for my country at home, at the muitilateral level and through our development cooperation. We support increased democratic participation, which requires strong and independent judicial systems, political institutions and free media. That in turn reinforces transparency and accountability, thereby making the abuse of power more difficult. We also support partner countries in their fight against corruption by strengthening institutions such as tax and audit authorities. For example, we organized the Stockholm Tax Conference, held in May, to promote capacity-building in the area of taxation. Efficient, transparent and effective tax administration supports poverty reduction and equality and is closely linked to the fight against corruption.

Every day in the Council we see the devastating effects that conflicts have on countries by undermining institutions and the rule of law, thereby creating more avenues for corruption. It is crucial to keep that aspect in mind when we plan for United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions. Work against corruption must be clearly included in mandates and in the support we provide to capacity-building and the reform of rule-of-law institutions. Mr. Prendergast has put forward additional ideas, including on how we could improve sanctions policies, which we believe are well worth considering and are very much in line with the work we have started in order to ensure that sanctions instruments become more efficient.

It is also important to ensure that the support that the United Nations provides to Member States in their anti-corruptions efforts is coherent. Missions, United Nations country teams and United Nations entities, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, must all work together. We must also continue to support models for international cooperation among practitioners, prosecutors and law enforcement. Not only does anti-corruption work address the crippling effects of corruption on societies, economies and lives, it is first and foremost about prevention. If we can build effective, accountable and inclusive public institutions and provide access to justice for all, we decrease the risk of a society sliding or relapsing into conflict. It is for that reason that corruption is and should remain part of the Council's agenda in the broader context of prevention and sustaining peace.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, we would like to thank the Secretary-General for the information he provided and his assessment of the threat of corruption in situations of conflict. We also thank Mr. Prendergast for his briefing.

Yes, conflicts do provide scope for profit and many people do indeed profit from them. We should not forget, however, that many conflicts are provoked by struggles, both concealed and open, over natural resources. And this is about external and well as internal players. Nowhere is that more evident than in Africa, where the thought of its undeveloped natural resources gives many no rest. We could term that the reverse side of corruption.

As the Secretary-General rightly said today, corruption is a feature of both rich and poor countries. It also exists in the United States, which lectured us about corruption today. It exists there in its traditional forms, but it is frequently disguised through unique institutions such as legalized lobbying. So if people want to discuss the subject in the Security Council, it would be more logical for them to start at home, and specifically with lobbying, which envelops the highest levels of power in the United States and is dictated by

the interests of numerous private military companies, whose commercial interests are inextricably entwined with those of the powerful defence lobby in the Capitol.

For the Council's information, the cause of the conflict in Ukraine was not Yanukovych's corruption but a coup d'état that exchanged one corrupt regime for another, which, unlike that of Yanukovych, has actually waged war on its own people. There are members of the Council who are well aware of the scale of the corruption in Ukraine because those people are their protégés. And it is that corruption, including in the military, that is fuelling the conflict in south-eastern Ukraine.

The Russian delegation has consistently advocated strengthening the central coordinating role of the United Nations in uniting the international community's efforts to prevent corruption and combat such scourges. In our view, the United Nations Convention against Corruption is a robust international legal framework for developing international cooperation in this area. Russia was one of the first countries to sign the Convention, in December 2003, and to ratify it, in March 2006. In 2015, the sixth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention was held in Saint Petersburg. We pay particular attention to the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the Convention, which we consider unique, open, transparent and unpoliticized, and which functions as an intergovernmental process based on respect for the principles of the equality and sovereignty of States and of non-intervention in domestic affairs.

We support strengthening the role of the United Nations and of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in providing expert assistance to States in their efforts to effectively implement the provisions of this critical Convention, and in UNODC's efforts to ensure its universalization. Russia is a major donor to UNODC's anti-corruption projects, including a number of joint initiatives such as the annual preparatory courses for contacts and Government experts participating in the review of the Convention's implementation. In 2017, Russia provided financial support for the operations of the United Nations Convention against Corruption Legal Library and the Tools and Resources for Anti-Corruption Knowledge web portal. In June in Vienna, on the eve of the World Cup, together with UNODC and with support from the BRICS countries, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, we held an international conference on preventing corruption in sports. As we know, intergovernmental open-ended working groups have been established in the framework of the Convention to review measures on preventing corruption, ensuring the restitution of assets and bringing together experts on international cooperation. All these formats are open, intergovernmental and technical in nature.

There are still gaps and inconsistencies in States' legal norms with regard to the restitution of criminally derived assets. In that connection, the Russian Federation has consistently supported the development of a corresponding multilateral international legal mechanism under the auspices of the United Nations, which would help to eliminate vague areas and would help to strengthen the coordination of the relevant bodies in supplying mutual legal assistance on criminal matters and extraditions, and in countering money-laundering.

As is blindingly clear, unpoliticized mechanisms for anti-corruption have been functioning effectively and are being developed at the United Nations. In that connection, we do not support initiatives aimed at enshrining the topic as some kind of so-called new challenge to international peace and security and thus making use of the forum and mechanisms of the Security Council in that context. That can only undermine the existing formats and would damage the practical cooperation of the relevant State agencies based on the United Nations Convention against Corruption. We believe that the distribution of labour that exists in the United Nations enables us to productively tackle the challenges in the area of anti-corruption activity, and that changing it, especially to the detriment of the authority of the United Nations, is counterproductive. There are no objective reasons for it. For our part, we will continue to assist the specialized bodies and mechanisms of international cooperation in this area and in adapting them to reflect the evolution of existing threats.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the convening of this meeting and thank the Secretary-General and Mr. Prendergast for their important briefings.

Peru attaches high priority to the issue that brings us together. Our country has not been spared the scourge of the corruption that affects our hemisphere. The problem manifests itself in different forms in every region of the world, and in the numerous conflicts that make up the Security Council's agenda. Corruption

erodes citizens' belief and trust in their authorities and institutions. It undermines ethical values, the rule of law, justice and democratic governance. It is one of the greatest obstacles to effectively addressing the needs and development of our peoples.

The transnational scope and multiple forms of corruption and organized crime should compel us to commit to strengthening international cooperation and multilateralism in order to respond consistently to the challenges that are shared by all our countries. That includes the work of the Council, given that according to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, this scourge represents a threat to the stability and security of societies. It is clear that corruption is a root cause of many conflicts and humanitarian crises, and it is often associated with organized crime, which in turn manifests itself as a financial backer and enabler of violence and terrorism through activities such as money-laundering and the illicit arms trade. In that regard, we would like to recall the Council's presidential statement of 8 May (S/PRST/2018/9), which commits us to deepening investigations in order to better understand the nature and scope of the links between terrorists and transnational organized crime. Peru attaches high priority to the fight against corruption and organized crime, in line with the Convention against Corruption and with Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which, among other things, commits us to promoting peaceful and inclusive societies and to strengthening the rule of law.

We emphasize that sustaining peace, defined as a general objective and a permanent process in identical resolutions recently reaffirmed by the General Assembly and the Council (resolutions 70/262 and 2282 (2016)), duly commits us to consolidating inclusive, transparent and accountable national institutions.

An effective fight against corruption requires a culture of integrity and of constitutional provisions that guarantee checks and balances on the exercise of power. That includes full access to justice to ensure that there is no impunity and greater participation by women and young people in political and institutional life. The citizenry must be able to know about the accusations in cases of corruption in a timely manner and participate, in an informed manner, in political life.

We are also believe that the scope of corruption demands a coordinated response from Governments. That is why, at the eighth Summit of the Americas, held in Lima in April, Peru promoted the adoption of the Lima Commitment, which includes 57 measures and concrete actions in support of the fight against corruption and regional cooperation in that area. We are currently working on its implementation.

In line with the need to prevent corruption from degenerating into conflicts and humanitarian crises, we consider it essential that the international community have at its disposal mechanisms for early warning and exchanging good practices. We therefore consider it important to consider extending Council sanctions regimes to corruption and money-laundering networks that benefit from conflicts, as Mr. Prendergast has proposed.

Finally, with a view to strengthening national institutions called on to sustain peace, we consider it important to ensure that the fight against corruption and respect for fundamental freedoms are reflected in the mandates of peacekeeping operations and other missions mandated by the Council in countries affected by conflict, as appropriate.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Secretary-General and Mr. Prendergast for their briefings. We have listened carefully to both and we agree that corruption erodes the economy, weakens Government institutions and enables other, related crimes, such as money-laundering and international transfers of illegally derived funds, often used to finance mechanisms in support of terrorist activities. Similarly, corruption undermines the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 16, regarding the building of robust institutions, a challenge from which no State is exempt.

However, the fact that corruption affects all States to varying degrees does not indicate that it constitutes a threat to international peace and security per se. In many cases, corruption derives from weak institutions due to a lack of economic resources or regions with armed conflict. It can also emerge where there is a lack of State presence as a product of the key causes of conflicts. We therefore believe that corruption is fundamentally an issue that falls under the functions and powers of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the relevant subsidiary bodies of the Organization. Those powers are set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, and the Security Council is duty-bound to respect that and to confine itself to

matters that constitute threats to international peace and security.

The Security Council must identify threats to international peace and security in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter, as stipulated in Article 24, paragraph 2. The Council must also comply with the Charter and with international law both in its decisions and in its actions. The interference of the Security Council in the functions and powers of other organs of the United Nations is a distortion of the purposes and principles of the Charter, undermines the authority of those organs and violates the rights of all Member States.

Including corruption as a threat to international peace and security in the Council's agenda does not give any added value and leads only to greater politicization of the issue and heightened disagreement among States. In that regard, Bolivia emphasizes that the Security Council's decision to hold this informative briefing should not be considered a precedent and should not lead to undermining the authority or mandate of the competent bodies in which the entire membership participates or to the exploitation of this meeting for ideological reasons. Likewise, it should neither lead to the undermining of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of States by using the Security Council under the pretext of fighting corruption for international peace and security, nor should it be used for ideological reasons, as we said before. By the same token, it should not be used as an excuse to undercut legitimate and democratic Governments or to encourage policies of regime change.

The Council should set an example of defending and promoting the rule of law, respecting the sovereign equality of States, the peaceful settlement of disputes and non-interference in the domestic jurisdiction of any State. Selective application and politicization of rules that aggravate conflicts and weaken the credibility and authority of the Security Council, and thus the United Nations system, should be avoided.

The United Nations, and the international community in general, should cooperate with Member States in the creation and strengthening of their institutions and the rule of law, assuming responsibility themselves for fighting corruption, and I repeat, doing that in strict respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of States.

In Bolivia, President Evo Morales Ayma, together with other authorities of the country, decided voluntarily and for the first time in the history of Bolivia, to renounce banking secrecy for the sake of transparency — an example that should be replicated throughout the world.

Moreover, at the international level, this year marks the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, which enjoys broad international consensus and has served as an international framework for cooperation to strengthen prevention and mitigate the risks of corruption. At the regional level, the member States of the Organization of American States adopted the Lima Commitment to tackle systemic corruption. Bolivia adhered to those documents, as well as to the Inter-American Convention against Corruption. There are also initiatives against corruption in the framework of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Union of South American Nations.

However, rules and regulations are not everything. A strong political commitment to fight such a phenomenon and take concrete actions to eliminate that evil is needed. In that regard, it is necessary to work on the elimination of tax havens, as well as to design, adopt and implement measures to supervise and control transnational corporations, which undermine the sovereignty of States and in many cases encourage corruption and the violation of human rights. As Mr. Prendergast mentioned, the financial system is used through those tax havens and banking secrecy, and in conjunction with transnational corporations, to launder money from criminal activities, including corruption and the plundering of natural resources, which is used, inter alia, to finance conflicts. That is why we must fight corruption worldwide — first and foremost within the global financial system.

In conclusion, we emphasize our conviction that the promotion of the rule of law at the international level is fundamental to make a reality a fairer world and Organization that can deal with the phenomenon of corruption effectively and in respect for the sovereignty of all States.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Madam President, for holding this important meeting and for the concept note. We also appreciate the briefing by the Secretary-General and that of Mr. John Prendergast, whom we

thank for his thoughts and proposals about targeted sanctions. We believe that there is a need to further look into them. The Security Council managed previously to move from general sanctions to targeted and smart sanctions. However, we believe that it is high time to evaluate that experience more thoroughly.

I will cover three main aspects in my statement: first, the causes and repercussions of corruption; secondly, the role of the United Nations in fighting corruption and in international cooperation; and, thirdly, the steps taken by the State of Kuwait to fight corruption.

First, with respect to the causes and repercussions of corruption, we know that our world today is suffering from the spread of corruption to varying degrees. The Secretary-General mentioned some facts and figures that stress that point, especially in areas that suffer from political or security turmoil. Corruption does not exist in a vacuum. There are underlying economic and social causes, such as poverty, oppression, inequality, violations of human rights and a decline in levels of social justice, as well as the absence of the rule of law. All those create fertile ground for the proliferation of corruption.

The increase in the levels of corruption in societies negatively impacts the national security of countries, similar to terrorism, violent extremism and organized crime. Many examples and conflicts have proven that there is a close link between the spread of corruption and the intensity of conflicts. Corruption increases as conflicts become more intense, which is why conflicts become prolonged. The risk of corruption is not limited to one country alone, but rather it threatens regional and international security. The spread of corruption deepens human misery, injustice and the misuse and waste of public and private resources. Corruption can destroy the economies of countries by diminishing economic growth, slowing development and increasing unemployment and poverty.

Secondly, with regard to the role of the United Nations in fighting corruption, as well as in international cooperation, the United Nations Convention against Corruption, adopted by the General Assembly in 2003, is considered a solid legal framework that includes a set of norms, measures and rules that should be implemented by all parties to the Convention in order to promote its legal and regulatory systems to fight corruption. If implemented, it will reduce the incidence of corruption, especially since the Convention further states that the United Nations would provide assistance to Member States for capacity-building and the implementation of programmes that promote transparency, integrity, accountability and the rule of law. We therefore urge Governments, the private sector and civil society to take a collective stand against that phenomenon so that we can attain a just and more prosperous future for all.

In that regard, we underscore the need to strengthen cooperation and coordination with regional and international entities in order to promote measures to fight corruption. We must establish regional networks to fight corruption, strengthen cooperation, share expertise and work towards the implementation of United Nations conventions in several areas, such as in the areas of extradition and exchange of information. As the Secretary-General mentioned in his briefing, corruption exists in all countries — large and small, rich and poor, North and South.

Thirdly, in 2016, the State of Kuwait established an anti-corruption authority to fulfil our obligations under the United Nations Convention against Corruption. I will mention briefly some of the objectives that the authority aims to achieve, namely, promote the principles of transparency and integrity in economic and administrative transactions; implement the United Nations Convention against Corruption and other international conventions and treaties on fighting corruption; work on fighting corruption, reduce its threats and repercussions and prosecute its perpetrators; seize and restore assets and proceeds from corruption, in accordance with the law; protect State institutions from bribery, trading in influence and the misuse of power; protect whistle-blowers about corruption; promote the principle of cooperation and participation with countries and regional and international organizations; and encourage and operationalize the role of civil society institutions and organizations to fight corruption and increase society's awareness of its risks.

In conclusion, we stress that the issue of fighting and eliminating corruption is a common responsibility that starts with the individual in particular and the State in general. Corruption is a tool that allows its perpetrators to achieve their purpose quickly, illicitly and illegally. We can put an end to such a phenomenon by educating societies and providing a decent life and equality to all, and by Governments implementing international conventions and treaties pertaining to this

issue, while above all strengthening and applying the rule of law without discrimination.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): As I take the floor on behalf of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea at this important debate, I would first like to congratulate the United States Mission and Ambassador Nikki Haley for including the important issue of corruption on the agenda of the Security Council for the first time. Today's debate is taking place one day after Africa Day, on 9 September, which was celebrated under the theme "Winning the Fight against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Africa's Transformation". I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, and Mr. Prendergast for their insightful briefings, which greatly enrich today's debate.

If we understand corruption as the act of corrupting someone or allowing oneself to be corrupted, misusing one's official position to obtain or grant an illegitimate advantage, then we can say that corruption is a form of moral turpitude and that its sphere of influence pervades all layers, especially the civil service but also the private business sector. Obviously, the term "corrupt" implies a diversion of services or the results thereof, which are generally economic, to other illegitimate recipients, which constitutes misappropriation. Therefore, in one way or another, it is covered by Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Influence peddling, bribery, extortion and fraud are some of the corrupt practices that are reflected in actions such as giving money to public officials in exchange for a service or the omission of their official responsibility. Unfortunately, we are facing a scourge that does not differentiate among States; it is found in developed and developing countries alike. While there may be more cases in some countries than in others, it is a shared problem and concern for all nations of the world — so much so that international cooperation and the exchange of experiences and strategies in that area are of global interest.

Although it is not their only source of financing, the mafias, terrorists, criminal networks and mercenaries, in satisfying their different ambitions, also resort to extorting and corrupting certain officials in order to obtain public goods and services, which leads to war, public disorder, waste and so forth, with the ultimate objective, in most cases, of seizing the countries' political or economic power, in particular their natural resources. My country, Equatorial Guinea, has fallen victim several times to those types of attempts, the most recent of which took place in December.

As far as the Republic of Equatorial Guinea is concerned, not only does the law on civil servants of the central administration of the State prohibit and penalize, including with separation from service, officials who engage in those types of practices, but also, on 5 February 2004, a decree was enacted that put into effect the law on ethics and dignity in the exercise of public functions. In our view, if civil servants maintain high moral and ethical values, it will be harder for them to lower themselves to committing crimes, such as corruption, which are totally contrary to their code of ethics.

Aware of the relevance of that issue and the great damage it causes for society throughout the world, His Excellency Mr. Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, and the Government have on several occasions publicly condemned that practice and taken appropriate actions and urged the country's legislature to develop every possible legal instruments aimed at combating corruption.

I must also point out that our national development plan, known as Horizon 2020, includes as one of its main objectives the achievement of good governance, which obviously includes supporting measures such as achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, including poverty reduction. It is hoped that, in attaining the Goals, it will be harder to justify misleading or derailing certain public servants. However, many researchers have agreed that improving working conditions is among the aspects that need to be reviewed to reduce the impact of the problem. Therefore, we encourage the international community to ensure that each country takes all possible measures to ensure good governance and thereby improve the standard of living of its people in order to reduce the tendency towards corruption.

In the area of peacebuilding, the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea has contributed to the best of its ability by always providing human and financial resources in the subregion of Central Africa and on the African continent in general. In order for the international community to succeed in this area, States must get involved by improving their domestic legislation to allow them to tackle this universal scourge and enhance cooperation. In that regard, I take this opportunity to commend the United Nations

Office on Drugs and Crime on its work and the great effort it has undertaken so far in several States to eradicate corruption with a view to reducing the serious conflicts that simmer and persist in those countries. Consequently, for the purpose of preventing conflicts fuelled by corruption in all their manifestations, it is the duty of States to cooperate with the competent international organizations and to take preventive measures to reduce this practice, which is becoming systemic in many societies.

Unfortunately, transnational corporations, backed by some powerful countries and with many financial resources, in order to achieve their objectives of maximum profits, sometimes corrupt officials, especially from the poorest countries, with a view to obtaining large profits by working outside the legally established rules. Therefore, there is also a moral duty to be borne by corporate actors and their backers to comply with the law of the countries where they operate and submit to the rule of law and avoid impunity, another source of social unrest, and therefore a possible cause of conflict.

In accordance with the position of the African Union, we urge States in conflict to strengthen their public institutions, transparency and accountability for the perpetrators of corrupt acts that strengthen armed groups and facilitate the trafficking in arms, drugs and persons for personal gain and who destabilize society as a whole. These actions are essential in order to achieve the noble goal of silencing the weapons and putting an end to all wars on our continent as soon as possible.

We believe that the mandates of peacekeeping, peacebuilding and political missions must include measures and strategies that allow them greater access to international financial information pertaining to the parties to a conflict in order to reduce corruption, which influences the length of a conflict and, for each specific case, a specific formula for the control and monitoring of funds on the ground, necessary expenditures and payments that have actually been made, thereby ensuring an exhaustive and impartial accounting.

Let me conclude my statement by quoting Argentine journalist Hugo Alconada Mon, who stated in his book *The Root of All Evil*: "Corruption is like tango; it takes two to dance."

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): I would like to congratulate the presidency of the Security Council for taking the initiative of convening today's briefing. Allow me also to thank the Secretary-General and Mr. John Prendergast for their very informative briefings.

One might say that corruption is an internal problem of a country, but it is not. The fact is that corruption undermines governmental institutions and weakens judiciary systems and countries' economies. It also undermines armies' ability to stand up to terrorist groups, especially in countries in which soldiers are not well paid or fully equipped. In an environment of low morale, corruption can thrive. It provides terrorists with access to financing and weapons and undermines the rule of law, good governance and human rights. Widespread and systematic corruption is one of the root causes of many conflicts that may constitute a threat to international peace and security.

Corruption is also one of the major structural obstacles to successful post-conflict reconstruction in its negative impact on the three foundational pillars of the United Nations system, namely, peace and security, human rights, and sustainable development. It all leads to one conclusion: corruption is not confined to national borders. The Security Council cannot turn a blind eye to corruption and terrorism that have joined forces in conflict-affected countries. However, we have to bear in mind that it is both a factor and a consequence of the present security challenges we face. I would like to share with the Council a few ideas that, in our opinion, could contribute to addressing the problem.

First, we should veer towards a policy of financial pressure aimed at reforms. Donors should send a clear message that they are willing to stop funding or reject projects if the Government in question fails to include safeguards to prevent corruption. The scope of Security Council sanctions should be expanded when deemed necessary. By targeting multiple actors at the same time, there is a chance of having greater impact.

Secondly, with regard to good governance and transparency, Poland considers the fight against corruption as a cornerstone of modern democratic societies. Member States and international institutions should support long-term democratic and transparency processes and governance reform. Capacity-building programmes in all sectors need to be re-evaluated so that they no longer bolster existing corrupt institutions. We all know that, without political will, no reform can bring about the desired effects. Globally, we call for the universal adoption of the United Nations Convention against Corruption and close cooperation

among institutions dealing with corruption, such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Council of Europe and the European Union. We also see civil society as an essential partner in this area.

For many years, Poland has advocated at the Human Rights Council for the adoption of a draft resolution on the role of good governance in the promotion and protection of human rights focused, inter alia, on the fight against corruption. Poland has also been successful in developing cooperation with interested countries that have implemented at the local and regional levels measures contributing to reducing corruption in the governmental sector. We also provide training in which we share anti-money-laundering practices and counter-terrorist financing measures.

Lastly, we call for enacting anti-money laundering measures when needed. Bodies like the Financial Action Task Force have developed international standards to combat money laundering, and countries should use that toolbox of measures and implement them at the national level. If such measures were implemented effectively by countries, their implementation could create an environment in which corruption, terrorist financing and money laundering would fail to go unnoticed.

In conclusion, Poland is fully committed to reducing corruption. It is disruptive to people's lives and countries, and not a single one is immune to corruption. As reducing levels of corruption is one of the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it makes it an even more challenging and ambitious objective, and we should all strive towards achieving it.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): We thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his briefing on the topic of our discussion today. We also are grateful to Mr. Prendergast for his remarks.

We all recognize the negative effects of corruption on the political, economic and sociocultural stability of societies. It undermines accountability and transparency in the management of public affairs, and it is inimical to socioeconomic development. As stated in the preamble of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, it can also pose a threat to the stability and security of societies, while undermining the institutions and values of democracy, ethical values and justice and jeopardizing sustainable development and the rule of law. While recognizing that fact, we do not believe that this is an issue within the purview of the Security Council. Based on the principle of complementarity, the Council should be able to allow other relevant organs to handle such cross-cutting issues.

Of course, there is nothing that precludes the Council from considering corruption in the context of conflict-specific situations, and we understand that that has been the case so far. Within the framework of the various relevant sanctions regimes, the Council has been taking measures to address the embezzlement of public resources. In that regard, a number of cases can be cited in which the Council took decisions to ban trade in charcoal, oil and minerals. In terms of the fight against terrorism, the Council also has adopted important resolutions for countering the financing of terrorism. The Council should continue to use such tools where appropriate in mitigating the negative impact of corruption in instigating and fuelling conflicts and violence. Nevertheless, even in the context of conflict-specific situations, corruption cannot be looked at in isolation, as it cannot be the only factor, but a manifestation of many other serious political and socioeconomic challenges contributing to instability and conflict. That is why sanctions cannot be the only tools for addressing the threats posed by corruption.

There has to be a comprehensive and long-term strategy aimed at tackling the root causes of conflict, among which corruption could be one of them. That cannot be done without ensuring good governance, strengthening State institutions and promoting accountability and transparency, as well as ensuring the rule of law. Neither is the fight against corruption something that should be left to Government alone; it requires the active participation and engagement of all segments of society, including women, young people, the media and the private sector. It is because of that broader scope and dimension that we believe that corruption should be dealt with by other relevant United Nations organs. The United Nations Convention against Corruption is the only legally binding anti-corruption instrument that provides a comprehensive response, and the vast majority of us are State parties to the Convention. In that regard, we recognize the work by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in providing technical assistance to Member States in various corruption-related thematic areas, such as prevention, education, asset recovery and integrity in the criminal justice system, among others.

We in Africa have been facing serious challenges as a result of corruption that are hampering efforts aimed

at promoting democratic governance, socioeconomic transformation, peace and security and the enjoyment of human rights. The High-pevel Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa, chaired by President Thabo Mbeki, highlighted the magnitude of the problem in its report submitted to the African Union Commission and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in February 2015. The report found that, on average, African countries lose $50 billion every year — with a potential of rising to $148 billion — through illicit financial flows. Also according to the report, corrupt practices play a key role in facilitating those outflows.

That is why the African Union declared 2018 as the African Anti-Corruption year to curb corruption, which is considered as a major societal flaw causing setbacks in the socioeconomic and political development of the continent. The feeling by our leaders is that, if corruption is not dealt with as a matter of priority, Africa cannot make meaningful progress towards achieving its Agenda 2063 and the 2030 global plan for sustainable development, and neither can it succeed in its efforts towards silencing the guns.

At the level of the African Union, we also have in place the Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, along with other legal instruments aimed at fostering a culture of democracy and ensuring good governance and the rule of law. We believe that greater cooperation and collaboration among the relevant bodies of the United Nations and the African Union and its regional mechanisms in the fight against corruption is something that needs to be encouraged.

The meeting rose at noon.

United Nations S/PV.83[illegible]

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8347th meeting
Tuesday, 11 September 2018, 11 a.m.
New York

President:	Mrs. Haley	(United States of America)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Mr. Radomski
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Tribute to the victims of the attacks of 11 September 2001

The President: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

We sit here today on 11 September. Seventeen years after the attacks of 11 September 2001, it hurts us as much today is it did on the day it happened. I was at the 9/11 memorial ceremony this morning. They started reading the names. As we start this Security Council meeting, they are still reading the names of those who were lost. We lost thousands of people on that day. We lost mothers and fathers. We lost sisters and brothers. We lost sons and daughters. We lost friends. We saw heroism at its best. We saw friends helping friends. We saw those helping the disabled. We saw first responders go back into burning buildings, knowing that they might not come back out. It was the true testament of courage, sacrifice and patriotism.

But that day taught us a lot of lessons. It taught us the lesson that we can never let our guard down. It taught us the lesson that evil exists. And it taught us the lesson that we should never stop trying for peace and security in this world. And so, when we look at Americans and we see the United States of America that stands today, we see that we fight harder, we defend more passionately and we love more strongly because we know what pain and sacrifice are. But we also know that we will never forget.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I ask members of the Council to stand and observe a minute of silence.

The members of the Security Council observed a minute of silence.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are marking a sad date today, and we have just come from memorializing the unfortunate victims who died in that terrible tragedy. Across the street from the Russian Mission in New York are a police station and a fire station whose employees took part in rescuing people on 11 September 2001. Today I went up to the fire station chief to offer my sympathy and appreciation for the heroism of the firefighters and police who helped in that rescue.

I also want to remind the Council that on that day of 11 September, President Putin was the first of the foreign leaders who called President George W. Bush to express his condolences, support and readiness to help combat the monstrous phenomenon that we were witnessing. Russia is familiar with international terrorism, and not merely by reputation, unfortunately. We continue to reach out to every country and to believe that it is our duty to fight this evil together, as our proposal to create a genuinely broad international coalition to combat international terrorism testifies.

Seeing the interest that has been shown in the third summit of the Astana format guarantor countries, held in Tehran on 7 September, we have decided to speak about its main conclusions in the forum of the Security Council. The meeting was a major milestone on the road to the restoration of peace and the establishment of a durable long-term settlement in the Syrian Arab Republic. Together with our Iranian and Turkish counterparts, we have circulated the concluding joint statement as an official document of the Security Council. The three Presidents' addresses to the summit, and their press conference and joint statement, send a clear message to the international community that Russia, Iran and Turkey are ready to do everything in their power to continue to contribute to the final destruction of terrorism on Syrian soil, putting an end to civilian suffering and establishing post-conflict reconstruction and real progress with the political process, enabling the Syrians themselves to determine their future. It is also important that the guarantor countries reaffirmed their commitment to Syria's sovereignty, unity, political independence and

territorial integrity as the basis for all their actions in the context of this crisis.

There was a substantive discussion in Tehran of the situation in Idlib, where tens of thousands of militants from Jabhat Al-Nusra, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and other groups that the Security Council has declared outlawed as terrorists are concentrated. It was with that in mind that Russia, Iran and Turkey expressed their shared determination to completely eliminate these remnants of terrorism all over Syria that are threatening the security of the region, while giving maximum attention to preventing civilian casualties. We should not pass up the chance of reconciliation for those who are ready for dialogue, and we hope that those in Idlib will hear that call. We are demanding that the armed groups stop shelling peaceful towns and villages, something that is going on regularly. Just the other day, nine people, including children, were killed, and dozens injured in a rocket and mortar attack on the town of Muhradah in northern Hamah province, and three people died when several rocket missiles were fired at the neighbouring town of Al-Suqaylabiyah.

The joint statement noted the urgent need to dissociate the members of the armed opposition that have chosen the path of a political settlement from the terrorists. In the view of the summit participants that separation will be decisive in ensuring the safety of the civilian population. That is why those in Tehran have appealed to all the members of the international community with the ability to influence the armed groups in Idlib to cooperate in separating them from the terrorists. At the same time, we cannot allow the terrorists to indefinitely hold hundreds of thousands of civilians in Idlib hostage and use them as human shields. As every United Nations resolution stipulates, there can be no coexisting with terrorists, and it is impermissible to let them off the hook. After all, these are all offshoots and varieties of the same Al-Qaida that we all launched a joint fight against in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, and from which we can expect the worst possible brutalities anywhere in the world. We are remembering those tragic events this very day.

The Tehran summit again affirmed the fact that there can be no alternative to a political settlement in Syria. We hope that the three guarantor countries' message will be heard by all. That position takes on special significance today against a backdrop of threats to resort to military intervention in Syria and strike Government facilities in the guise of a response to claims of Damascus's use of toxic substances and allegations that President Al-Assad has ordered the use of chlorine. The Syrian authorities are not about to do this. They have no chemical weapons. We are once again asking the Council to listen: from a military point of view there is no justification for the use of chemical weapons by Damascus, while both militarily and politically it would be damaging insofar as it would be an invitation to the Western troika to strike at Syria, which they are threatening to do on that same pretext of the use of chemical weapons. Meanwhile, there is a strong possibility of provocations from those of Damascus's opponents who are counting on the forceful support of their foreign patrons, and we have incontrovertible evidence of preparations for that.

The third Astana summit contrasted such dangerous and vain military attempts with the work of activating a political process led and implemented by the Syrians themselves, without dictation or pressure from outside. In accordance with instructions from their three Presidents, high representatives of Russia, Iran and Turkey were to hold consultations on 10 and 11 September with Staffan de Mistura, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, with the goal of establishing the most representative possible constitutional committee in Geneva as soon as possible, capable of reflecting the interests and aspirations of every Syrian and of beginning work in accordance with the decisions of the Congress of the Syrian National Dialogue, held in Sochi on 30 January, and with resolution 2254 (2015).

Much attention in Tehran was focused on the work of post-conflict reconstruction in the Syrian Arab Republic. The conditions are ripe. The people's acute humanitarian needs are enormous, from food problems and humanitarian mine clearance to the restoration of basic infrastructure facilities. But none of this should involve the political blackmail that many Western capitals openly invoke. Promises of bread and butter in exchange for political regime change in Damascus do no honour to those who talk about Syria's humanitarian problems at donor conferences but obstruct the provision of genuine assistance to the Syrian people and maintain unilateral sanctions.

An important item on the summit's agenda was the three guarantor countries' discussion of the issues related to facilitating the mass return of Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons to their

original homes. As we know, the Syrian Government has given the relevant security guarantees, and there is great interest in this on the part of Syria's neighbours. We definitely think that at a suitable point a major international conference, to be developed by Russia, Iran and Turkey, will be convened for the purpose of making a significant contribution to that task.

The unanimous acceptance of the effectiveness of and need for the Astana format was one of the most results of the Tehran summit. Russia, Iran and Turkey have shown — not in words but in deed — that we can compromise on the most difficult situations when required. Our interaction has enabled us to stop large-scale violence in Syria, provide for long-term stabilization, create the conditions necessary for a genuine start to the settlement process, and achieve a political transformation that would benefit all Syrians. In Tehran, it was stated very clearly that work of that kind will continue and cover the broadest possible range of issues in Syria. The next summit will be held in Russia.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): I thank you personally, Madam President, for your impressive words in commemoration of the victims of 9/11. The Kingdom of the Netherlands has stood and will stand in full solidarity with the United States. Our thoughts are with all those who lost loved ones on that terrible day 17 years ago.

Let me thank the Russian delegation for providing us with an update on the results of the third trilateral summit of Astana guarantors in Tehran. I will focus on three points: first, the risk of rapid escalation; secondly, the responsibility of the Astana guarantors; and, thirdly, the need to protect civilians.

First, the risk of rapid escalation involving regional and international players is great. The potential consequences of an escalation of violence are horrific. In our view, there is an urgent need for a real shift of focus towards diplomacy at the negotiating table, with the goal of bringing a non-military solution closer. Only a political solution, in line with resolution 2254 (2016), can end the conflict in a sustainable and peaceful manner.

Secondly, with regard to the responsibility of the Astana guarantors and the need for a complete cessation of hostilities, frankly speaking the Kingdom of the Netherlands is disappointed with the results of the Tehran summit. It is our view that it is the responsibility of the Astana guarantors to uphold the ceasefire and de-escalation arrangements to which they have previously agreed, and to protect civilians as a matter of priority. During the Tehran summit, the Astana guarantors reiterated their pledge to seek a negotiated solution to Syria's seven-year conflict, but in practice we see that two of the three guarantors are instead getting ready for a full-scale military offensive in Idlib. On the day of the summit and over the weekend, we saw escalation instead of de-escalation. It is a continuation of the well-known pattern of fighting in de-escalation zones that reminds us of eastern Ghouta and Dar'a earlier this year.

If the Russian Federation and Iran are serious about a non-military solution and de-escalation, they need to cease further military build-up around Idlib and stop the aerial attacks immediately. It is crucial that the de-escalation zone be upheld. There needs to be an immediate and complete ceasefire. We share Turkish concerns about escalating violence in Idlib and an imminent humanitarian catastrophe. Turkey already hosts 3.5 million Syrian refugees. The Kingdom of the Netherlands appreciates and respects that and fully shares Turkish concerns.

Thirdly, with regard to the urgent need for the protection of civilians who encounter terrorism, in our view all parties involved should exercise utmost restraint, put the protection of civilians first and allow unhindered humanitarian access. Civilians are not the ones who should leave Idlib. We are sceptical about the concept of corridors or protected evacuation routes, not in the least because of the enormous number of civilians in Idlib. For example, if medical evacuations are attempted, they must be in line with the minimum standards for humanitarian evacuations that have been circulated by the United Nations. Parties need to uphold international humanitarian law throughout Syria, and in particular in Idlib.

Any measure to counter terrorism must comply with obligations under international law, in particular human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law. Combating terrorism is no excuse for attacking without distinction or proportionality. Recent peaceful protests by the civilian population in Idlib against violence and extremism show that Idlib is not a hotbed of terrorism. That also became very clear during the Arria Formula meeting last Friday, at which Bassma Kodmani stated that civilians are a strong asset in countering terrorism. As Special Envoy De

Mistura stated last Friday, there must be — and there is — another way than all-out military escalation.

There are alternatives. We can and should prevent a terrible tragedy and, at the same time, allow the issue of Security Council-designated terrorist groups to be addressed. We call on all actors to use their influence on the warring parties in Idlib to put the protection of civilians first. If separating Al-Nusra from armed groups is the central issue in Idlib, then we need to listen to the Special Envoy on how to operationalize it. If the Astana guarantors want international support for their efforts in that regard, then guarantors must also be transparent about what exactly they are planning. I repeat, any plan must put the protection of civilians first.

Let me also stress the importance of unimpeded United Nations humanitarian aid and the protection of hospitals, schools and humanitarian aid workers. We are shocked by reports of White Helmets being targeted once again over the weekend in so-called double-tap strikes. Over the weekend, three hospitals were struck. Two Syrian civil defence centres and an ambulance system were hit. Their coordinates were well known and deconfliction had taken place. Such developments and actions are of extreme concern to us.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands will continue its efforts to achieve accountability for such crimes. Impunity cannot prevail. In our view, referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court remains the best option.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of France, allow me to begin by conveying the solidarity of my country and all French citizens with our American friends and the United States, as a whole, as we remember the tragedy that took place on 11 September 2001. I also hope that the spirit of unity that prevailed on 9/11, which I myself felt very deeply as I was in the United States at the time, could provide genuine inspiration for our work.

I thank the American presidency of the Council and Russia for convening today's meeting as an extension of the meetings held late last week. My statement will be relatively brief. I will focus on two priority issues that France believes are complementary and inextricably linked: first, preventing a military offensive in Idlib, which would open one of the bloodiest chapters of the Syrian tragedy and lead to dire consequences; and, secondly, creating genuine momentum for a political settlement to the conflict. We all know that the path is an extremely difficult one, but we also believe that a solution is possible.

Despite calls from the international community, the number of which is unprecedented in recent history, the Tehran meeting did not lead to a firm commitment on the part of Russia and Iran to preserving the de-escalation that they themselves had guaranteed. In the wake of the Tehran summit, millions of Syrians in Idlib remain uncertain that their lives will be spared. On the contrary, in the wake of the Tehran summit the Russian air force resumed its aerial bombardment in support of the regime.

Let us be clear: our common priority continues to be combating terrorism, and it could, and should, bring us together. As Council members are aware, France is fully playing its part in that regard. But that fight cannot justify indiscriminate attacks against civilians or serious violations of international humanitarian law. Such attacks constitute a humanitarian tragedy as well as a strategic absurdity, in that they fuel the very terrorism they purport to combat. Hence, Syria has become the pre-eminent breeding ground for terrorism. Among the 3 million people who are being held hostage in Idlib — a number greater than the population of Paris — many of them took to the streets peacefully last week to say how unfairly they are being targeted, to express their rejection of terrorism and to recall their legitimate aspirations for the rule of law in Syria. Those massive demonstrations, whose images we have seen, show the faces behind the numbers.

We know — and it was extensively detailed last Friday (see S/PV.8345) — how a major offensive in Idlib would have disastrous consequences for the country and the region, in humanitarian, security and political terms.

On the humanitarian front, several tens of thousands of people have begun to reach northern Idlib to flee the bombing. They are only the first in what could be a new and unprecedented migration crisis, of which Turkey, which already hosts nearly 15 per cent of the Syrian population who fled the regime's massacres since 2011, will be the first to be impacted. We must do everything possible to ensure safe, full and unhindered humanitarian access to the entire population in need. In that regard, I commend the heroic role being played by the White Helmets in going to the aid of civilians under bombardment, at the risk of their own lives and in the midst of the ruins and rubble.

France also reiterates that it will not tolerate any new use of chemical weapons. Along with our close partners, we stand ready to respond in the event of a chemical attack. Our most senior officials have unambiguously spoken on that point.

Maintaining the ceasefire and protecting civilians, including humanitarian personnel, must be the first priority for actors on the ground. That is why Russia must become involved. I welcome the involvement of the United Nations in deterring escalation and preparing to deal with it in the event. We must do everything possible to prevent civilians from being targeted. We therefore have a collective responsibility to leave no stone unturned — to turn off our automatic pilot — so as to find areas of agreement and together explore every possible solution, including the most creative, to avoid military escalation and open up the way for a political settlement. Such a solution, if we succeed in coming together, could be at hand tomorrow. That is why we need to allow time for dialogue so that solutions emerge. That is our first priority today. At the moment, the guarantors' task is to avert the irreversible and to take the time needed to find an agreement by working together with us all.

Let us be clear as well that the situation in Idlib is a further illustration, were there a need for one, of three facts that everyone must clearly bear in mind: Syria is in not a country that is returning to normalcy, quite the opposite is true; the Syrian tragedy is not behind us, indeed the worst could be ahead in the event of a major offensive in Idlib; and the total military retaking of Idlib, in which the regime and its supporters are engaged, will not make it possible to stabilize the country and will produce only more chaos, which is to say that the same causes produce the same effects. Therefore, and I say it again, the only real and lasting way out of the conflict is a negotiated political solution that is acceptable to all. There is no solution other than recourse to the demanding path of negotiation.

And therefore our values, interests and realpolitik demand that we come together to fully and collectively support the efforts of the United Nations Special Envoy to relaunch the Geneva process. That includes the establishment of a constitutional committee as soon as possible, which could be the key to at last clearing the path to a political solution. Its work could begin without delay, in a truly independent way, under the auspices of the United Nations.

Resolution 2254 (2015) provides the elements for a broader political solution, namely, a constitution, free and transparent elections in which all Syrians, including displaced persons and refugees, can vote, and the establishment of a safe, secure and neutral environment, guaranteed by confidence-building measures. We are two weeks away from the commencement of the general debate at the General Assembly, where our leaders will all be gathered. Let us take advantage of that opportunity before us.

The road map we are proposing is clear: strong commitment by the parties to a ceasefire in order to spare the civilian population of Idlib; speeding up the political process, with the first step being collective support for the launch of the work of a constitutional committee; and the joining together by the members of the Security Council in support of a constructive political agenda at the General Assembly to force destiny and seize a concerted, peaceful resolution to the conflict. The reconstruction of Syria is conceivable only on that basis — when an irreversible, credible and inclusive political transition gets under way.

I say again to Russia that the ball is in its court. It should assume clear and firm commitments to avoid the irreparable in Idlib and reassure the civilians there, afford more time for dialogue to identify a solution for Idlib, and come together with us to chart the challenging course towards peace in Syria. France stands ready to contribute to that end without losing a minute. Let us all get to work.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Today is a special day for remembering. I would first of all like to convey my profound condolences for the victims of the 9/11 incident, and to the families our sympathy. The international community stands firmly together in our battle against terrorism.

I thank you, Madam, President for convening this meeting. I also wish to thank Ambassador Nebenzia for his briefing.

China welcomes the summit of the leaders of Russia, Turkey and Iran that took place on 7 September and culminated in a joint statement. China commends the tireless efforts of the three countries to push for a diplomatic solution to the Syrian issue. The Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Syra, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, is currently stepping up his engagement with the parties concerned with regard to the establishment of a Syrian constitutional committee. We believe

that those developments will play and important and positive role in improving the situation in the Syrian town of Idlib and in advancing a political settlement of the Syrian question.

There is no alternative to a political settlement for Syria to achieve peace and stability. All parties should abide by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and other universally recognized, basic norms of international relations; fully respect Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity; and avoid the use or threat of use of force as a reflex.

The international community should join forces to continue its fight against terrorism and consolidate the counter-terrorism achievements made thus far. All parties should take measures to spare innocent civilians any harm. We call on the international community to increase humanitarian assistance to Syria. The international community should continue to leverage the role of the United Nations as the primary mediator, support the Geneva talks and the Astana process in playing their due roles, and encourage the Syrian parties to find a progressive solution that is in line with reality and addresses the concerns of the parties by adhering to the Syrian-led and Syrian-owned process and implementing Council resolution 2254 (2015). We hope the discussions on the creation of a Syrian constitutional committee, facilitated by Special Envoy De Mistura, will serve as a new starting point for launching the political process. That places a burden on all parties concerned to meet one another halfway and contribute together to that end.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I want to convey my country's profound condolences, sympathy and friendship to the people of the United States on this very significant day, and underline the importance of standing shoulder to shoulder in the quest for peace.

First, I would like to thank the Russian representative for his briefing, which is very timely.

Last week, during and after the meeting we expressed our alarm over the signs of a possible military offensive in north-western Syria, as it would risk leading to catastrophic humanitarian consequences, which are avoidable and must be avoided. We are deeply concerned, however, by the recent escalation of violence on the part of Syria and Russia in Idlib and surrounding areas. We reiterate that all parties in Syria must respect their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians and civilian objects and to comply with the principles of distinction, proportionality and avoidance of unnecessary suffering.

We have said before and repeat now that Idlib is different from other areas as there is nowhere to flee. There are 3 million civilians living there, including many children and internally displaced persons. Idlib is a de-escalation area established by the Astana guarantors, and that is why we all looked to their meeting last Friday with some hope. It is key that they step up efforts to immediately implement their own de-escalation agreement in Idlib, ensure humanitarian access and the protection of civilians, and avoid further military escalation.

It is urgent for them to act now to avoid the enormous humanitarian catastrophe that would unfold before our eyes in a large-scale military offensive. This is not hypothetical, as we have witnessed all de-escalation areas turning into escalation areas over the past year. The responsibility and ability to avoid a catastrophe and allow time for dialogue lies with Syria and Russia. The Council, however, should also explore all meaningful options to prevent military escalation and find a peaceful solution to Idlib, in accordance with international law.

Last Friday, Special Envoy De Mistura presented some ideas that merit consideration. We need to explore any concrete, meaningful suggestions and proposals over the coming days to ensure that the Council collectively shoulders its responsibility. We remain available to explore all options for preventive action by the Council. We reiterate our full support for the Special Envoy, including his efforts to swiftly establish a constitutional committee. A United Nations-facilitated political solution, in line with resolution 2254 (2015), is the only way to ensure a sustainable solution to the crisis, to end the suffering and to address the legitimate concerns of all Syrians.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): On this day, as we commemorate the tragic events of 11 September 2001, I once again convey my country's solidarity with the Government and the people of the United States.

My delegation thanks the Russian Federation for calling for this briefing, which sheds light on the conclusions of the third tripartite summit of the guarantors of the Astana process, held in Tehran on 7 September, which also addressed the situation in Idlib

province. The meeting took place in a context marked by concerns about the imminence of a large-scale offensive by the Syrian armed forces against the rebel strongholds in Idlib governorate.

Côte d'Ivoire has consistently expressed its disapproval of the use of force by any actor and has reiterated, along with all observers of the Syrian conflict, that such an armed confrontation would cause an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe in a province that is home to some 3 million people, more than half of whom are internally displaced. Those fears are compoumded by the threat of the use of chemical weapons, for which the belligerents are already denying responsibility.

In the context of growing tensions, the Tehran meeting was a real source of hope both for the people of Idlib and for the international community. Unfortunately, it does not seem to have provided reassuring answers to concerns about the fate of Idlib province, in particular with regard to the protection of civilians and the humanitarian repercussions of the conflict, the Astana guarantors having insisted only on the need to combat "terrorism and the right of Damascus to recover its entire territory".

The numerous calls for restraint by the Security Council and the international community did not prevent the recent escalation of violence, which, according to the spokesman for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Mr. David Swanson, resulted in the displacement of more than 30,000 people. Again according to OCHA, between 1 and 9 September 30,542 women, children and men were displaced from the south and south-west of Idlib, as well as from the north and north-west of neighbouring Hama province.

Côte d'Ivoire remains convinced that there is still time to give peace a chance. It therefore urges all parties involved to immediately implement a ceasefire and to pursue negotiations, in the spirit of resolution 2254 (2015), in order to prevent an even larger humanitarian tragedy in Syria.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): This morning's meeting coincides with the commemoration of the terrorist attacks that took place on 11 September 2001, claiming thousands of innocent victims among the friendly American people. We would like to convey once again our condolences to the American people and the families of the victims, and to express our solidarity with them on this day. We also reiterate our commitment to working with our partners and allies to eliminate the scourge of terrorism, which threatens international peace and security. We too pledge to pursue our efforts as a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham.

I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his briefing to the Security Council on the outcome of the summit held in Tehran on Friday among the Astana guarantors. The summit addressed the situation in Syria generally and in Idlib specifically. In that regard, we call on the parties concerned to pursue the dialogue process at all levels in order to reach a peaceful resolution to the situation in Idlib.

The State of Kuwait reiterates what we have noted in previous meetings, namely, that any military escalation in Idlib would have catastrophic humanitarian consequences. It is the most vulnerable of the society — women, children, the elderly and the sick — who would pay the heaviest price. We have seen what happened in other parts of Syria, some of which were designated de-escalation zones.

We have closely followed the recent reports of some international organizations on the situation in Idlib and the surrounding areas. We would like to voice our deep concern in the light of the information that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has reported on the displacement of more than 30,000 persons from Idlib during the past few days as a result of the recent escalation there.

We also followed the press conference that the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Mark Lowcock, held yesterday in Geneva, during which he called upon the international community to address the crisis in a way that would prevent Idlib in the months ahead from becoming the worst humanitarian catastrophe, with the heaviest loss of lives, in the twenty-first century. I reiterate that warning by saying that if a comprehensive military operation were to take place in Idlib, which must draw the attention of the Security Council, then we would indeed face the worst humanitarian catastrophe, with the heaviest loss of lives, in the twenty-first century.

We remind all parties of the need to honour their commitments under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and to uphold the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution, as well as of the protection of civilians

and civilian sites. Military attacks targeting groups categorized as terrorist groups by the Security Council absolutely do not give any party to the conflict cause to violate its obligations under international law. Let us remember that wars have rules, and that in Idlib there is one terrorist for every 100 civilians, most of whom are women and children.

We reiterate our support to for Secretary-General António Guterres, who in a statement of 29 August, urgently appealed to the Syrian Government and all parties concerned to exercise restraint. He also called on the Astana guarantors to step up efforts to find a peaceful solution to the situation in Idlib and to devote more time and attention to diplomatic efforts in order to avoid further bloodshed. In this context, we hope that the meetings held today and yesterday in Geneva by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, will find ways to save the lives of innocent civilians.

This is the fourth meeting that we have held on Syria in less than one week. We hope that these meetings will draw attention to Idlib and contribute to sustaining the diplomatic efforts of us all in order to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe and maintain the commitment to implementing Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2401 (2018), which calls for a ceasefire, for humanitarian aid to reach those who are in need, and for the protection of civilians and health-care an ' civilian facilities. We hope that the messages that come out of our meetings will reach the parties concerned and make them aware that the Security Council will closely follow the situation in Idlib and is ready to take the measures necessary to shoulder its humanitarian and legal responsibilities towards the inhabitants of Idlib.

In conclusion, we underscore once again that the best and most sustainale solution to the Syrian crisis is a political solution under the auspices of the United Nations and in line with resolution 2254 (2015) and the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex).

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): Our hearts still go out to all the victims and families of the unforgettable and unforgivable terrorist attack of 9/11. We send our prayers and profound condolences to all those families that lost loved ones at the World Trade Center. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, people all over the world, including Kazakhstan, stood shoulder to shoulder in mourning, solidarity, sympathy and friendship with the people of the United States. This day is not only to commemorate but also to make sure that it never happens again anywhere else in the world. Our resolve, collective effort and unity against terrorism is the way forward.

We thank the delegation of the Russian Federation for initiating this open briefing to discuss the outcome of the Tehran summit, which has great implications for the current phase of the Syrian crisis. Kazakhstan welcomes the trilateral summit of the Heads of the guarantor countries of the Astana process in Tehran, which resulted in the adoption of a joint statement and further cooperation among the three countries to resolve the Syrian crisis.

As we know, the guarantor States of the Astana process — Russia, Iran and Turkey — have met for the third time, with very constructive outcomes of a turning point for the Syrian people. The summit was held under the common understanding of the unacceptability of any provocations. The Heads of the guarantor States also confirmed the commitment to preserving the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. The summit also clearly demonstrated the positive role of the Astana process in coordinating international activities related to the Syrian peace process, including preserving the political unity and integrity of the country.

We welcome the most notable parts of the text, referring to cooperation against terrorist groups such as Da'esh, the Al-Nusra Front and Al-Qaida, and the importance of distinguishing between terrorists and armed opposition groups participating in the ceasefire. The statement also emphasizes the political process, the creation of a constitutional committee, humanitarian assistance, the repatriation of asylum-seekers and the organization of an international conference on refugees and internally displaced persons. Kazakhstan believes that this will contribute to the final formation of a constitutional committee and undoubtedly have a positive impact on the political processes and preparations to hold free elections in Syria.

The summit proved once again that urgent international tasks can be solved only on the basis of respect, trust and constructive cooperation. My delegation notes with satisfaction that a ceasefire in Idlib was facilitated, thereby creating new opportunities for the political process. In that vein, we are convinced that the world community should direct its joint efforts

towards creating the conditions for the settlement of the intra-Syrian conflict by exclusively peaceful means, rebuilding the ruined country and addressing the complex humanitarian situation. We also need to support the creation of conditions for the return of numerous Syrian refugees. In that regard, the idea of convening an international conference on Syrian refugees could be a first step towards a collective solution of the problem.

Kazakhstan commends Moscow, Tehran and Ankara for their agreement to exert all efforts to protect the population and improve the humanitarian situation, in particular by restoring the economy and infrastructure to address acute social problems. Another important point was the emphasis on the political process, conveying that there is no military solution to the crisis and the parties concerned should sit down at the negotiating table.

It would be wrong to suggest that the trilateral summit produced an ultimate formula to resolve the Idlib crisis. We are sure that the unresolved issues will take time and further efforts to settle. In that context, we look forward to the next meeting of the guarantor countries of the Astana process in Moscow to discuss all issues related to the recent developments on the ground.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We reiterate our solidarity with the United States and the families of the thousands of victims claimed by the evil hands of terrorism on 9/11 — a phenomenon against which we stand united.

We appreciate the convening of this meeting and the statement delivered by the representative of the Russian Federation on the meeting held by the guarantors of the Astana process in the city of Tehran. We take careful note of the information provided, as well as of the joint statement issued by the Presidents of Iran, Russia and Turkey. In that regard, we welcome the ongoing cooperation among the Astana guarantors and underline the need for them to prevent a new escalation of violence and suffering in Idlib.

We must nevertheless express our alarm and regret at the intensification of the attacks in recent days, which have resulted in numerous fatalities, new internally displaced persons and the destruction of civilian infrastructure. All of that must cease.

Peru condemns terrorism and believes that terrorist groups must be held accountable for the crimes they have committed. We also recognize the right of the Syrian Government to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity, but we stress that in no case does that justify new massacres of civilians.

We believe that the Astana guarantors, because of their influence on the ground, have a special responsibility in the current delicate scenario, all the more so when Idlib is one of the de-escalation zones agreed upon by those guarantors.

We commend the tireless work of Mr. De Mistura in bringing the parties together and finding a way to avoid a new humanitarian tragedy. We support in particular his proposal to promote an effective separation between civilians and terrorists. We recognize that is a highly complex task, but we believe we must commit to it.

We hope that the meeting held yesterday among the Special Envoy and the Astana guarantors and the one to be held this week with the other countries involved in the Syrian crisis will lead to firm commitments to the political process based on resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex).

We would like to commend the valuable efforts being made by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and its staff to provide a humanitarian response in such difficult circumstances.

We conclude by stressing the need for the Council to send a strong message to the international community that it will not tolerate impunity with regard to the continuing violations of international law and international humanitarian law. The Council cannot once again be a mere bystander in the face of scenes of horror. It is our chief responsibility to prevent those tragedies and to protect the civilian population.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurnational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We join in commemorating and in expressing our condolences and solidarity to the people of the United States and to the relatives of those persons who lost their lives in the 11 September 2001 attacks. The fight against terrorism is a task that is shared by the entire international community.

We would like to thank the United States presidency of the Security Council for convening this important meeting. We thank the Russian delegation for the briefing it provided on the outcome of the tripartite meeting of the Astana guarantors that took place in Iran on 7 September. Having listened very carefully to that briefing, we feel compelled to reiterate our hope that

the violence in this conflict, which has raged for more than eight years, can be reduced across Syria, especially in densely populated areas. We therefore welcome the meeting held in Tehran and its joint outcome statement, because it served to confirm support for the provisions of the Astana agreement, which led to the establishment of crucial de-escalation zones, which we view as one of the international initiatives that have helped to reduce violence and facilitate peace and stability in Syria.

We call on the parties to work towards the full implementation of resolution 2401 (2018) and highlight the local agreements that contributed to reducing violence and that allowed for the evacuation of persons in need, including persons belonging to armed groups and their families, and facilitated the entry of humanitarian assistance. We hope that those agreements will continue to be upheld in order to allow the civilian population to return to their places of origin. We recall that any return must be voluntary, unhindered, in full dignity and in safe conditions.

Against that backdrop, we believe that the common denominator in this conflict must be adoption of measures to reduce violence on the ground, to build confidence among the parties, to alleviate humanitarian suffering and to advance initiatives, such as those previously mentioned, aimed at finding a political and peaceful solution to the conflict in general. However, the current priority is to take measures to protect the 2.9 million civilians who live in Idlib province and the surrounding areas. We eagerly await the outcomes of yesterday and today's meetings, which are taking place in Geneva, among Special Envoy Staffan De Mistura and the Astana guarantors.

We believe that any effort undertaken or any measure taken within the framework of resolution 2401 (2018) aimed at combating terrorist groups designated by the Security Council or armed groups in order to separate them from the civilian population must also take into consideration the protection of civilian lives within the context of international law. Along the same lines, we believe the political process needs to be bolstered on the basis of the Sochi outcome document and the establishment of a constitutional committee, a process that needs to be facilitated by the United Nations within the framework of the Geneva process and in accordance with the provisions of resolution 2254 (2015). We recall that the principles agreed upon in the Sochi statement do not only reinforce the political process, but they also serve to defend and uphold the rule of law and respect for people's rights and to combat the threat of terrorism and violent extremism, which lead to terrorism.

We emphasize that the Tehran meeting served to foster dialogue aimed at promoting the protection of civilians and the provision of humanitarian assistance to them, including the 6.2 million internally displaced persons throughout Syria and specifically the 1.4 million who are located in Idlib province. We underscore the initiative to convene an international conference on Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as the need to keep the issue of the release of detainees and the identification of missing persons on the agenda.

Finally, we express our rejection of any attempt to fragment Syria or to divide it along sectarian lines. On the contrary, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and with respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of that country, we insist that the conflict in Syria has no military solution and that the only way to resolve it is through an inclusive political process of dialogue and consensus, led by and for the Syrian people, that allows for a peaceful and lasting solution to the current situation.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): As we commemorate today the anniversary of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, I would like to join others in conveying our deepest condolences to the families of the victims of those attacks and our solidarity with the American people. The vivid memories of this day 17 years ago, which was especially important in this city, New York, should unify all of us in the fight against terrorism.

I thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting, and I thank Russia for its important briefing.

Poland is deeply concerned about the current developments in Syria, in particular with regard to the escalation of hostilities in Idlib province, resulting in new displacement during the past few days of over 30,000 women, children and men and scores of civilian deaths. That region is one of the de-escalation zones in Syria, established and overseen by the guarantors of the Astana process with a view to assuring a ceasefire and humanitarian access, in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian law.

The most recent escalation is again impacting civilians in a dramatic way. Poland shares the fears that the worst may be ahead of us. The safety and protection of approximately 2.9 million civilians residing in Idlib

and the surrounding areas is at risk. That includes about 1.4 million internally displaced persons, the majority of whom are women and children who came to the region from other areas

We are deeply alarmed by the fact that the ceasefire-related commitments and obligations are not respected by the Astana guarantors. We are disappointed that the meeting of the guarantors in Tehran ended without tangible conclusions. We call on Russia, Iran and Turkey, as well as on other actors with influence on the ground, to redouble their efforts in order to protect the civilian population of Idlib. In that context, the reported attacks on targets in Idlib that were carried out this past weekend are highly disquieting.

Any use of force, even against pockets of terrorists, cannot justify indiscriminate attacks on innocent civilians and civilian infrastructure, including medical and educational facilities. It will be civilians — innocent men, women and children — who will bear the brunt of hostilities if the scenario of an extensive military operation plays out in Idlib governorate. All sides must fully respect and comply with the principles of international humanitarian law, particularly with respect to the protection of civilians.

Let me stress the responsibility of the Council to prevent this potential tragedy. We cannot lose time and must act now in order to avoid mass casualties and yet another wave of displacement. The parties involved in Syria must take all the necessary steps to ensure the cessation of fighting, adequate protection for the Syrian people and, finally, urgent humanitarian access to Idlib and the necessary medical evacuations. We would also like to reiterate that refugees need to be provided with an opportunity affording them a safe, free and dignified return to their homes. A major military operation in Idlib governorate may hinder that goal, and consequently create a new wave of refugees. Furthermore, civilians who feel that their lives are at risk during the conflict must be able to leave freely at any time. Such movement must always be based on the free choice of each and every individual.

In conclusion, let me stress once again that there is no military solution to the conflict. Any attempt to bring peace by force will be counterproductive to achieving an inclusive and credible political process under the auspices of the United Nations.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I begin my statement by expressing our solidarity and that of our Government to the Government and the people of the United States of America and the families of those who heroically died as a result of the barbaric terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers and other sites in the country, which we are commemorating on today's anniversary. We convey to you, Ambassador Haley, our most sincere sympathy.

My delegation is grateful for the convening of this meeting, justified by the intense international attention that Idlib has drawn and the urgent need for a coordinated response so as to avoid an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. We are grateful to the Russian Federation for its briefing and to the three Astana guarantors who, in holding the third trilateral summit in Tehran, have become key actors in coordination efforts and political and security cooperation at the regional and international levels. The Government of Equatorial Guinea has taken note of the joint statement issued following the summit in Tehran, in the light of which my delegation would like to make the following comments.

We gratefully welcome the commitment of the Astana guarantors to continue cooperating to eradicate all persons, groups, enterprises and entities designated as terrorists in Syria by the Security Council. That position fully corresponds to that of the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, which is firmly opposed to terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Moreover, the resolve and commitment of the guarantors to not prioritize a military solution to the conflict and advocate for a negotiated political process is to be commended. We believe that it is essential that those two key provisions of the joint statement be ensured and realized on the ground. That is predicated upon all national and international parties abstaining from military operations, which could transform Idlib governorate into the target of intense bombings. At this past Friday's briefing (see S/PV.8345), we all were in agreement in stressing the grave consequences that a fierce military offensive would have for that area.

It is true that we must combat active terrorists in order to restore peace and stability to Syria. As the Iranian Chair pointed out at the summit, however, that must be done without causing suffering for the civilian population with a scorched-earth policy. While there seems to be no obvious military solution to neutralize the Idlib jihadists, it is also clear that a destructive offensive should not be considered as the appropriate response. Even if such an offensive succeeded in defeating those groups on the battlefield, the jihadist

threat would remain. We saw that scenario play out last year in the Euphrates Valley region following the territorial victory over and retaking of the city of Deir ez-Zor by the Syrian army from militias from the Islamic State. Remaining elements of jihadist militias can continue waging an asymmetrical war in Syria and beyond its borders in areas not under the control of the region's Governments. I therefore echo the words of Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura, who stated recently:

> "Let us try to avoid that the last, probably major, battle of the Syrian territorial conflict end in a bloodbath. We ask all countries to maintain moral pressure to avoid a drastic military option in Idlib and provide additional time for negotiations".

In that regard, we express our optimism regarding the meetings that the Special Envoy held yesterday and today with representatives of the Astana guarantors with a view towards negotiations to pave the way towards peace and the possibility of finding alternative solutions for ending the impasse and the armed conflict in Syria through the implementation of a Syrian-led, inclusive constitutional committee.

While plans to combat armed and terrorist factions in Idlib remain on the drawing table, the priority of the Security Council must continue to focus on the protection of the civilian population, of which almost 3 million people are already displaced and have no place to go.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): Allow me, Madam President, first of all, to take this opportunity to express our solidarity with the Government and the people of the United States on this day, which marks the commemoration of the tragic events of 11 September. My country was among the first to face the scourges of terrorism and knows at first-hand its devastating effects. We in Ethiopia in particular cannot forget to commemorate that horrific event, as it unfortunately coincides with the celebration of the Ethiopian New Year. Our thoughts and prayers will forever remain with the victims and their families.

We thank the delegation of Russia for its briefing on the outcome of the Astana summit. The importance of that meeting was clearly underscored last week in its role to finding a sustainable solution to the Idlib situation (see S/PV.8345). With the civilian casualties being reported, we continue to remain concerned about the humanitarian situation in Idlib. As we have stated repeatedly, further military escalation in Idlib could aggravate the humanitarian crisis and negatively affect the humanitarian assistance programme upon which millions of people depend for their existence.

We note that Iran, Russia and Turkey have agreed to continue their trilateral coordination and decided to address the Idlib situation in a spirit of cooperation according, to the joint statement issued following the summit. Conditions on the ground are difficult and require urgent and coordinated action. It is vital that the Astana guarantors continue to abide by the de-escalation agreement and find a sustainable solution that would protect civilians and civilian facilities. Facilitating safe, rapid, unhindered and sustained humanitarian access remains critical to ensuring that the United Nations and its humanitarian partners are able to deliver aid to all in need.

The joint statement also underlined the fact that, in the fight against terrorism, the separation of United Nations-listed terrorists from the armed opposition would be of the utmost importance. In that regard, the proposal that Special Envoy De Mistura presented on Friday could be considered positively, with the objective of ensuring the safety of civilians and civilian infrastructure. We hope that this will be discussed in the ongoing consultations with the Astana guarantors in Geneva.

Finally, we stress that there is no military solution to the Syrian crisis. Hence, all Syrian parties and those States with influence should engage in and support the continued efforts of the Special Envoy to establish and launch the constitutional committee. Ultimately, it is a Syrian-owned and Syrian-led political dialogue, facilitated by the United Nations, that could sustainably address the suffering of the Syrians.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I join my colleagues in expressing our condolences and solidarity with you, Madam President, your Mission, all our American friends and the citizens of this great city of New York for the losses of 9/11, and to all those countries that, like my own, lost their own nationals in the attacks. Speaking as someone who worked very closely with the American and other Governments in the aftermath of 9/11, I can say that I will never forget that day and that we will never cease to stand alongside them in the fight against terrorists and the unwavering campaign to protect our societies and defend civilians.

The attacks of 9/11 came without warning out of the clear blue sky. The horror of Syria has been unfolding

before us for more than six slow years. After 9/11, Russia and Iran worked with us. We urge them to work with us now to halt the attacks and protect the civilians of Idlib. There have been many inflection points that have come and gone on Syria. The Astana meeting, one would like to think, was another inflection point that would succeed. I think that it is very important that we can have this discussion and this debate today. We will soon hear from our Turkish colleague, whom we welcome to the Council.

But I want to stay right at the start that we strongly agree with President Erdoğan. This morning, he wrote in *The Wall Street Journal* that Al-Assad's solution to countering terrorism is a false one. He said that the plan to militarily attack Idlib will only create new hotbeds of terrorism. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham was an outcome and not the cause of what is happening in Syria.

We face a choice between an Al-Assad/Russia military assault on Idlib in which, as many colleagues have said today, thousands of civilians will die — we have seen in eastern Aleppo and eastern Ghouta what that looks like: the killing of children; attacks on schools and hospitals, even those in deconflicted areas; the barbaric use of chemical weapons — or allowing Turkey and opposition groups the support, space and time to separate out the terrorists and tackle them themselves. Turkey has a plan for Idlib, and it involves reaching an agreement with the Syrian opposition whereby the regime would refrain from attacking them while they combat terrorism. That is what we should be discussing today, but I think it was absent from the briefing we received from Russia just now.

We would like also to talk about how we can get together, through Astana or another grouping that works, to work out how the regime can work with the opposition to bring security and stability back to Idlib. I would like to know why the Council cannot spend time discussing how to build on the work of Astana to that end. This would not only provide a plan to rid the area of extremists, but would also provide the beginnings of a model for discussing a political process to resolve this conflict, which has gone on too long.

Every speaker today has talked about the importance of there being no alternative to a political solution. Of course we agree with that, but the United Nations Special Envoy has told us that progress on a political solution is impossible if there is a military assault on Idlib, so I would like to know from Russia and Iran that they will heed those words, that they will stop the military operations, and that they will come to the Council and discuss with all of us, including Turkey, how exactly we can build on Astana to engage seriously in order to finally — six years after some of the worst horrors we have seen in war since the Second World War — bring that to an end and get a political process under way in Syria. I will be grateful to hear from Russia and Iran how exactly we can bring that about.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

I want to start, obviously, by thanking all Council members for their heartfelt condolences and wishes. They are my brothers and sisters, and I think that is why, when we speak about something like Syria, we are all very passionate about it. We know what pain feels like, we know what suffering is and we get frustrated when we see things happening that we cannot control.

This meeting was called for the purpose of discussing the Astana talks for a peaceful solution in Syria. We welcome the opportunity to discuss the prospects for a diplomatic solution in Syria, but let us not waste time with the disinformation, distractions and outright lies that the Al-Assad regime and its Russian and Iranian partners constantly use to distort this conversation. Let us talk about the facts on the ground in Syria.

This month already, the world has seen a clear military escalation in Idlib. The Russian and Al-Assad regime air forces have launched over 100 air strikes. They are using barrel bombs, rockets and artillery. They are targeting hospitals and medical facilities. They are conducting ruthless double-tap strikes on civilian volunteers like the White Helmets. For those listening who have not heard of double-tap strikes, that is when pro-regime forces strike an area, wait a few moments for first responders to arrive and then strike again. It is a disgusting tactic of terrorists, not professional soldiers.

According to the United Nations, over 30,000 people have already been displaced by ongoing air strikes. We have heard a lot of talk today, but we have not seen any actions to indicate that Russia, Iran and Al-Assad are interested in a political solution. All we have seen are the actions of cowards interested in a bloody military conquest of Idlib. Turkey learned that lesson last week when it met with Russia and Iran. Turkey wanted them to agree to a ceasefire in Idlib,

but Russia and Iran rejected Turkey's request and the Al-Assad regime continued its brutal attacks.

The United States is long past taking Russia and Iran at their word that they are interested in protecting civilians in Idlib from further violence. No matter what type of weapons or methods are used, the United States strongly opposes any escalation of violence in Idlib. Every member of the Security Council should feel the same. It is time for Russia to stop wasting our time when it comes to peace in Syria. Russia and Iran have had every opportunity to demonstrate their credibility as constructive actors in Syria. But what have they done with these opportunities? They created so-called de-escalation zones throughout Syria, which they have cynically, systematically and ruthlessly violated. In February, they violated the de-escalation zone in eastern Ghouta. In July, Russia blatantly broke a commitment made by President Putin and President Trump to upholding a ceasefire arrangement in south-western Syria. Now, In Idlib, Russia and Iran are violating their last remaining so-called de-escalation zone.

These are not the actions of good-faith parties of peace. This is not how you demonstrate your commitment to protecting civilian lives, and this is not how you convince the United States and other countries to fund reconstruction efforts in Syria. I repeat that it would be absurd for the United States and other countries to consider the demands from Russia and its allies that the rest of the world should fund reconstruction efforts in Syria as Russian air strikes pummel Idlib in an escalation of a new military assault. Russia, Iran and Al-Assad are demolishing Idlib and asking us to call it peace. But the reality is that Astana has failed. It has failed to stop the violence or to promote a political solution.

We will know that the Al-Assad regime and its enablers are serious about a political process for peace in Syria not when they repeat empty promises but when the violence stops; when the air strikes and the ground offensives stop; when they allow the United Nations to deliver life-saving humanitarian aid to civilians and allow them the freedom of movement to escape the impending siege; when they work with us to pursue real terrorists, not to create more of them by targeting innocent civilians; when we see irreversible progress made through the United Nations-led Geneva talks to reach a political transition in line with resolution 2254 (2015); and when we see Iran's influence over events in Syria completely extinguished. We will not allow Iran, through the facade of the Astana process, to hijack the future of the Syrian people. Iran's role and Al-Assad's murderous attacks on civilians will not be ignored by the United States and the rest of the international community.

I would also like to reiterate what I said last week to the Al-Assad regime and anyone else contemplating the use of chemical weapons in Syria (see S/PV.8345). The United States followed through when I said that it would respond to the use of chemical weapons. We stand by that warning. Russia has the power to stop the catastrophe looming in Idlib. It has the power to stop the killing. It still has the power to match its words of peace with deeds by working in Geneva to achieve a political transition in Syria. We consider any assault on Idlib to be a reckless escalation of the conflict. If Al-Assad, Russia and Iran continue along the same path, the consequences will be dire. The world will hold them responsible and no number of Security Council meetings will change that.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked to make a further statement.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We have listened carefully to the discussion today. We have just as much interest in it as the other member States of the Security Council. Many people today have asked us to reveal our plans for Idlib. We too would like the coalition to share its plans for Syria with us, but frankly neither the plans announced by high-level representatives of the coalition members or those expressed during today's meeting give us much hope. We have heard concrete threats against both a sovereign State and Russia that, incidentally, are actually not directly linked to the possible use of chemical weapons.

When we discussed that issue here in the Chamber on Friday, I could see that nuances in how our Western partners expressed their positions had appeared. The alarm bells sounded with the statement of the principle that force could be used against the sovereign State of the Syrian Arab Republic in response not just to the alleged use of chemical weapons but also to the launch of a military operation in Idlib. I would like to ask you, Madam President, not to try to swap these terms. We are talking about an anti-terrorist operation in Idlib, not a military operation. There have been constant references to the de-escalation zones, but I want to once again

emphasize that they were intended to be temporary, not something that would be there forever. Sooner or later, they were to be replaced by local truces, and where that did not occur, by anti-terrorist operations. That is what has happened in other de-escalation areas now under the control of the Syrian authorities and to which Syrian civilians are now returning.

Both today and on Friday, I have also seen something else, which is that some of my colleagues have been stubbornly trying to divide the Astana guarantors. They will not succeed. Some of them would very much like the Astana process to collapse, and my American colleague said that the process has failed. Perhaps you would like that, Madam President, but I must disappoint you, because the Astana process is ongoing. And I am sure that with its help we will achieve tangible results in Syria.

I have said it before and I will say it again. Everything that is going on, and all the invocations we have heard about Idlib, are not so much out of concern for the civilian population there — and, incidentally, whose existence we are also aware of and about which we are no less concerned than you, Madam President — as they are attempts to find any way possible to preserve the last major terrorist enclave in Syria and thereby prevent the Syrian Government from regaining full control of its own territory. We continue to call on you to drop these attempts and work on the real process of reaching a political settlement. And you can be certain that we are in close contact both with our partners in the Astana process and with those who are in control of the situation on the ground in Idlib, so that we can prevent the civilian population from suffering as a result of an anti-terrorist operation as much as we possibly can.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to express my condolences to the families and friends of the victims of terrorism today.

The recent tripartite summit in Tehran took place at a critical juncture. The Presidents of Iran, Russia and Turkey, pleased with the contribution that the Astana format has made to peace, security and stability in Syria, discussed the way forward to durable peace in the country. They conveyed a clear message through their joint statement, reaffirming their continued strong commitment to Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity, which are every State's inherent right, and Syria is no exception to that. They should be strictly respected by all. The three Presidents rejected all attempts to create a new reality on the ground under the pretext of combating terrorism. That explicit and clear-cut message must be heard. As a victim of chemical weapons itself, Iran condemns in the strongest possible terms any use of such weapons by anyone, any time and anywhere. At the same time, we warn against any attacks, including under the pretext of the alleged use of such weapons by the Syrian Government. At a time when Syria has destroyed all of its chemical weapons under international supervision, such allegations are mere fabrications in an attempt to use force against it, and any such attempt would only further complicate the situation.

Another clear and strong message from the summit is that the Presidents are determined to continue their cooperation in eliminating all terrorists, including Da'esh, the Al-Nusra Front and all other individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with Al-Qaida or Da'esh, which have been designated as terrorists by the Council. Of course, that must be done while preventing civilian casualties. That is why the Presidents reaffirmed their determination to work towards protecting civilians. As President Rouhani stressed at the Tehran summit, combating terrorism requires a comprehensive approach by taking into account all aspects of this unpleasant phenomenon. From that perspective, the fight against terrorism in Idlib is an integral part of the mission of restoring peace and stability to Syria, but that fight must not hurt civilians.

Likewise, improving the humanitarian situation by facilitating rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to all Syrians in need was highlighted.

Those will be guiding principles with respect to ongoing efforts to combat terrorists in Idlib.

Precisely for that reason, the Presidents underlined the utmost importance of separating terrorists and the armed opposition groups that joined, or will join, the ceasefire regime.

Another concrete message of the Tehran summit was that the Syrian conflict can end only through a negotiated political process.

Against that backdrop, the Presidents stressed the need for, and their resolve to cooperate in, advancing

a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process. The right to determine the future of Syria belongs exclusively to Syrians. To that end, cooperation towards establishing and launching the work of a constitutional committee is critical.

Parallel to such efforts, conducive conditions should be prepared for the safe and voluntary return of all refugees and internally displaced persons. That will undoubtedly contribute to the ceasefire and national dialogue and accelerate the reconciliation process. To that end, convening an international conference on Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons is important.

While Syria is passing through a critical stage in defeating terrorists and regaining its unity and territorial integrity, the international community should stand firm in breathing new life into the country. As the Islamic Republic of Iran supported Syria to defeat terrorists, so will it play its constructive role in bringing peace and prosperity to the country.

Finally, with regard to the references made to my country by the representative of the United States, I should reiterate that Iran was invited by Syria to fight terrorists. However, the United States military operations in Syria are illegal and an act of aggression. They are against the Charter of the United Nations and should come to an end.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Sinirlioğlu (Turkey): At the outset, I also would like to pay homage to the memory of the victims of 9/11. Our thoughts and prayers are with their families. We should never forget that tragic day or lower our guard, and should always remain united in the fight against terrorism.

The Permanent Representatives of the Russian Federation and Iran briefed the Security Council about the Tehran summit held on 7 September. Upon instructions from my Government, I also would like to share my country's views on the outcome of the summit and our position on the developments in Idlib.

The Astana format was created in order to help reduce violence across Syria and give impetus to the political process. The importance of maintaining our joint efforts to end the conflict in Syria through a political solution were reconfirmed in the Astana meetings. The most concrete outcome of the format has been the establishment of the de-escalation zones. The Idlib de-escalation zone, as a case in point, has dramatically reduced violence in the province.

Idlib was the main agenda item at the Tehran summit. The leaders agreed that the situation in Idlib should be addressed in line with the principles and the spirit of cooperation that characterized the Astana format. Those shared principles, such as the preservation of the territorial integrity of Syria and the need to find a political solution to the conflict, are crucial for our efforts to succeed in Idlib and elsewhere in Syria.

At the summit, President Erdoğan underlined the need to preserve the de-escalation zone and called for an immediate and complete ceasefire in Idlib. The ceasefire, as highlighted by our Minister of Defence yesterday, should include all air and ground attacks. There can be no arbitrary hierarchy of death. While condemning and warning against chemical attacks, we cannot overlook the use of conventional weapons, which continue to cause massive casualties. Our calls for an immediate ceasefire include all military operations, and Turkey will continue to work on that basis. We invite the international community to vocally and actively support our efforts to that end.

As pointed out by the members of the Security Council, there is no doubt that an all-out military operation would result in a major humanitarian catastrophe. Such an operation would trigger a massive wave of refugees and tremendous security risks for Turkey, the rest of Europe and beyond. With all our generosity, we have gone to extraordinary lengths to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people, including hosting approximately 3.5 million refugees, more than any other country in the world. But let us face it: we long ago exceeded the limits of our capacity.

We simply cannot allow a fait accompli in Idlib that would endanger the lives of millions of innocent civilians. That is our collective duty as the international community. Today the people who are watching us with worry in Idlib are not terrorists, but rather 3.5 million civilians, 1 million of whom are children. We must not fail them.

The Syrian regime seeks to legitimize its operation on counter-terrorism grounds. Let us make no mistake: such an operation would not achieve the stated goal. In a complex place like Idlib, traditional counter-terrorism methods would not yield the desired results. On the contrary, they would create further suffering

and alienate and radicalize more Syrians. In that sense, a military operation in Idlib would only play into the hands of terrorists.

Only a viable ceasefire would allow the creation of an environment to effectively fight terrorism. That entails employing approaches that require time and patience. That is what Turkey has been working towards achieving through its separation efforts in Idlib. In order for our efforts to succeed, guarantees must be given to civilians and moderate opposition groups that they will not be targeted once they separate from terrorists. That is the underlying objective of the call for a ceasefire by President Erdoğan.

In line with the Astana memorandum, Turkey established 12 observation posts in the Idlib de-escalation zone. Our observation posts have prevented violations. Our presence has also contributed to creating conditions for separating terrorists from moderate opposition groups.

Furthermore, Turkey has been at the forefront in the fight against terrorism, and we are resolved to combat that scourge without discriminating among terrorist groups. We have reinstated stability and calm in the areas we cleared from terrorists in Syria. We are pleased to observe that hundreds of thousands of Syrians have voluntarily returned to their homeland and that a responsible approach to counter-terrorism can indeed win hearts and minds.

There should be no illusion: there can be no military victory in Syria. A military solution cannot bring about any legitimacy, or create a lasting settlement. Legitimacy can be achieved only through a negotiated political solution. The United Nations-led Geneva process remains the main venue to that end, in line with the resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). And the situation in Idlib will be decisive for the fate of the political process.

At the Tehran summit, the three guarantors reaffirmed their resolve to continue joint efforts to advance the political process. They reiterated their commitment to help establish and launch a constitutional committee. In that framework, senior officials of the three guarantors are currently meeting Special Envoy de Mistura in Geneva to continue their discussions to start the committee's work. We attach the utmost importance to the establishment of a constitutional committee and creating the conditions for holding free and fair elections under United Nations supervision without further delay.

As President Erdoğan stated in his article in *The Wall Street Journal* yesterday,

> "Idlib is the last exit before the toll. If the international community, including Europe and the United States, fails to take action now, not only innocent Syrians but the entire world stands to pay the price. Turkey has done everything in its power to stop the bloodshed next door. To ensure that we succeed, the rest of the world must set aside narrow self-interest and throw its weight behind a political solution."

Today — with our partners in Astana, with the Council under this roof and with the overall international community — we face the moment of of truth in defence of the values we stand for.

The President: The representative of the United Kingdom has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I will be brief, but I want to thank the Turkish representative for again setting out the Turkish plan. All of us have listened very carefully to the Astana briefers. We do not want to detract from the Astana efforts; we support any move that gets the political process under way. But we have heard only one plan today for trying to avert the bloodshed in Idlib and actually make a difference on the ground. I would urge all Security Council members to rally around the plan that our Turkish colleague has set out.

What worries me is that instead we have heard a narrative that restoring full Syrian control over its territory is synonymous with fighting terrorists. For the people of Idlib that is not the equation. The people of Idlib are going to suffer terribly if this military assault goes ahead. It is precisely for these situations that the doctrine of proportionality under international humanitarian law exists.

I therefore hope that the Council can come together over the coming days to talk further about how we can maximize the political process, building on Astana's efforts but as well having a very serious discussion about how we can avert an all-out military attack on the people of Idlib.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.8348

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8348th meeting
Tuesday, 11 September 2018, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mrs. Haley	(United States of America)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mrs. Cordova Soria
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Yemen to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, to participate in this meeting.

Mr. Griffiths is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Amman.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Griffiths.

Mr. Griffiths: Let me first express my sympathies to you, Madam President, your Government and your people on this tragic day that we have all mourned for so long.

When I called for the intra-Yemeni consultations in Geneva, I never expected it to be an easy mission. The parties have not met for more than two years, the war has been escalating virtually on all fronts, the level of confidence is at its lowest, I believe, and the human and humanitarian cost is ever-rising. The parties have been locked into a cycle of violence. In contrast, the main victims of this war, the Yemeni people, naturally enough, have been yearning for a peaceful political solution that can end their misery, put an end to the war and deliver a Government that is in a position to address their basic needs. I have also learned that this is no longer a race between political and military institutions and solutions. It is, instead, a race to salvage what is left of State institutions as quickly as possible. It is with that sense of urgency that I was encouraged — as you know, Madam President — to move forward with the parties so as to inject a prospect of hope into this conflict and to develop an alternative narrative to the narrative of war.

Following six or seven months of intensive discussions with the parties, and based on my strong conviction, supported by the Security Council, in the need for a political solution to the conflict, I decided to call for formal consultations that would lead to a resumption of the political process. Indeed, I had the honour of being with the Council on 2 August to announce that call (see S/PV.8323). I am glad to report to the Council that, despite the absence of one of the sides to the consultations in Geneva last week, and although it certainly did not go as planned, we still managed to relaunch the political process with solid support from the Yemeni people and the international community.

Of course, I was as disappointed as anyone that we were unable to bring the delegation from Sana'a to Geneva. That is not what I had planned for last week, and I certainly would not want to see that happen again, and neither would any of us. But I will continue not to be drawn into going into the details of the many issues that we had to overcome together, even if we ultimately failed to bring the delegation to Geneva. I stress that everybody — in Geneva, in Amman, in the Coalition, in the Government of Yemen — tried to overcome the issues that were presented to us, but it simply did not work out on this occasion. I promise to make absolutely sure that does not happen again.

The Yemeni political process, like so many others of its kind, will see ups and downs. The challenges we faced last week — and I suppose this is my main messagge — remain temporary hurdles to be overcome. That is not a sign, in my view, that the political and military situation, as dire as it is — and perhaps because it is dire — is not conducive to formal consultations. We need to stay focused on nurturing the political process, particularly in these fragile early stages, and build the needed momentum so that it can deliver tangible benefits to Yemenis throughout Yemen. Such a process is not simply about holding and moving from one big and, indeed, short event to the next. Instead, it needs political will, determination and commitment from all the actors, including the members of the Council, as well as putting the interests of the Yemeni people above all else. I see my role, therefore, as working with the parties to understand their concerns, hopes and expectations, so that I can provide them with the needed help and support to move the process forward. My role, therefore, and perhaps somewhat controversially, is to encourage but not expose them, and to work with but not undermine them, all the while reminding them of the need to respect their obligations and responsibilities towards the Yemeni people and the international community.

As the parties resume the formal efforts to make compromises and build trust, it is important that we do not allow ourselves to become embroiled once again in large-scale military confrontations. As I said, the fighting is escalating on all sides, but we have still not seen an attack on the city or the port of Al-Hudaydah, although there are operations on the outskirts of the city. I hope that will continue to be the case. We are concerned about the launching of attacks by Ansar Allah forces towards Saudi Arabia, as the Council has frequently made mention, and the attacks on the Red Sea shows the ongoing threat the conflict poses for regional security.

In addition, the continued decline in the Yemeni rial and broader economic decay are pushing people further into vulnerable situations and poverty. The frustration is rising, and with it is the threat of the conflict, particularly in the south — during the past 10 days there have been widespread demonstrations in the southern governorates. The protesters give voice to their concerns over the economic situation and basic-service delivery, and they remind us of the importance of listening to southern voices and ensuring their meaningful participation in arrangements that will put an end to the conflict. I have met with several southern groups in recent months and I will be meeting with them again. They have been strongly in favour of resolving their concerns through dialogue and are keen to participate — I am glad to say — in the political process.

I will continue my discussions by holding a set of visits in the coming days, including tomorrow to Muscat and then to Sana'a, to engage with the political leadership in those two cities. I have two objectives for the visit. First, I intend to make tangible progress while building on discussions in Geneva on key confidence-building measures, including on an exchange of prisoners and the opening of Sana'a airport. I am greatly encouraged by the very positive, open and constructive approach to the issues that I have encountered by the Government of Yemen and from the coalition in their support. I am keen to outline public commitments to progressing on those issues in the coming days.

My second objective, unsurprisingly, is to secure a firm commitment from the parties to convening for continued positive consultations. I hope to meet with the Government of Yemen in Riyadh and look forward to seeing President Hadi Mansour. I must say that I am very grateful to him and his Government for their support of all the efforts that the United Nations is making to provide a political solution to the conflict. I am grateful to him and his Government as well for their delegation's presence in Geneva and for their constructive participation in rather unusual circumstances there.

I am also planning to consult soon, as I have said, with a number of southern stakeholders to agree on their meaningful participation in the process. I would like to add, not least, that we were able to enjoy the presence of a group of women from Yemen with strong specific strengths on various issues. Given that fact that there was more time available than anticipated, I believe we will have a very positive trajectory going forward as to how they will advise me and have a meaningful input into the process. The inclusivity of the process is crucial for its success, and while there are two principal parties, it would behoove me continue to seek broader consultations with people whom I think can advise me to better perform my duties.

Finally, the reason that I am so grateful to you, Madam President, for convening this meeting today, so soon after Geneva and, indeed, before I am able to outline a positive path back to peace, I would like to say this — the road to peace is never straight; it will always be difficult, particularly at a time when the process is restarting after two years of enmity, opposition, doubt, confusion and a lack of confidence. It is not surprising that there will be those who, in this case, find it difficult to attend and that there are those who did not find some element of interest. This is not the last time that we will have difficulties, but I am sure that it will be the last time that we have that particular difficulty.

But it does not mean for one minute — and this is why I am glad to be here — that the process towards peace is made more difficult. It is made more urgent. I think we learned some lessons in Geneva and, if I may, I would like to ask for the Council's continued support for the efforts of the international community and my Office, under the Secretary-General, to move back to the table with all speed.

The President: I thank Mr. Griffiths for his briefing. The challenge that he has before him is not lost on us, which is why we continue to appreciate his service.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting, which we appreciate very much. It was very good to hear from the Special Envoy. We appreciate the efforts he has made. We share his disappointment at the fact that the talks did not go ahead as planned, but it was good to hear that the consultations he did manage to hold yielded some positive outcomes. I think among those was the inclusivity point that Mr. Griffiths mentioned, particularly on the presence of women, which I think is excellent. But I urge all sides, including the Houthis, to get behind the process that the Special Envoy is leading, invest in confidence-building measures and engage in future consultations in good faith. That is bound to require flexibility from all sides, but we all know, and we have said many times, that there is no alternative to a political solution.

We support Mr. Griffiths and we would like to continue to support him to the hilt. We can offer Security Council members some press elements, if that would be welcome, as a way of expressing that the Council stands behind him at this time as he tries to bring all the parties back together. I think that what he said about the economy of Yemen just gives added urgency to an already desperate situation. I therefore hope we can all build on that.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): First, let me thank Special Envoy Martin Griffiths for his realistic briefing to us today, as well as for his persistence and resilience.

I will address three issues: first, the political process; secondly, the effects of the conflict on the civilian population; and, thirdly, the humanitarian situation.

First, with regard to the political process, we share Martin's disappointment that one party did not make it to the highly anticipated consultations in Geneva last weekend. However, the beginning of those kinds of consultations is never easy, especially not following two years of growing distrust between the parties since the last negotiations took place, in Kuwait. Confidence has to be rebuilt one step at a time, and we commend Martin's efforts in making that happen.

Confidence-building measures, as proposed and discussed in Geneva, are focused on the most crucial of issues that we face in Yemen — the well-being of ordinary Yemeni citizens and issues such as resuming medical flights out of Sana'a airport and addressing Yemen's failing economy. We strongly support that approach and call on the parties to show good faith at this critical juncture. They should engage with the Special Envoy by taking meaningful steps to achieve them.

This weekend's minor setback can, and must, be overcome. It should not be used to justify an escalation on the battlefield. A sustainable, peaceful, political solution is the only way forward. Unfortunately, already we have seen an increase in clashes in Al-Hudaydah, as well as enhanced tensions in Aden. We call on all sides to demonstrate their commitment to peace. They should show restraint, de-escalate and engage without preconditions with the United Nations-facilitated process.

Let me also take this opportunity to express particular appreciation for Martin's efforts in strengthening female participation in the process, a point which he just elaborated.

Secondly, with regard to the effects of the conflict on the civilian population, the last time the Council met in consultations we discussed the worrying spike in civilian casualties as hostilities increased. Since then, we have witnessed more violations of international humanitarian law. Those violations include an attack on a World Food Programme food truck, an air strike in Ad Durayhimi and the injuring of civilians as a result of a shot-down Houthi missile. We condemn those practices. As the Council, we must continue to send a clear signal that all parties must comply with international humanitarian law and should address its violations. Accountability must continue to feature high on our agenda, including to sustain a future political agreement.

Thirdly, with regard to the humanitarian situation, the concerns raised by the Special Envoy about the devastating humanitarian impact of any further escalation in Al-Hudaydah and Aden are as prominent as they have ever been, and the Council has expressed itself several times in that regard. In line with the presidential statement of March (S/PRST/2018/5), we continue to insist on the full and sustained opening of the ports of Al-Hudaydah and Saleef, as well as the unimpeded distribution of supplies throughout the country. That includes access for ships carrying containers and fuel, as facilitated by the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism.

In conclusion, the reinvigoration of the political process and bringing it to a successful resolution will likely be a long process. The first steps have now been

taken. In order to keep the process moving all parties need to take their responsibility. They need to move beyond words and show their commitment by taking concrete steps to restore confidence. We will stay closely engaged as Mr. Griffiths' work progresses. Let me express the hope that the Security Council will stay united in supporting the Special Envoy in finding a peaceful, political and sustainable solution in the interests of the people of Yemen.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Martin Griffiths for his briefing and tireless efforts to bring together the parties to engage in discussion. I repeat that Martin has the full support of France. I would like to convey three brief messages, before I address some of the points in greater detail during the consultations that follow.

France regrets that the talks planned in Geneva at the invitation of the United Nations could not be held. As Mr. Griffiths eloquently recalled, it is essential to safeguard the possibility for restarting the dialogue. Geneva might be a missed opportunity in that regard, but it is by no means the end of efforts to move the political process forward.

My third message is that, more than ever, we must call on the parties to remain engaged with the Special Envoy in order to resume dialogue as soon as possible and move forward the political process, which is the only possible solution to the conflict in Yemen, as we all know. United Nations mediation is the only path towards a relaunching discussions with a view to reaching an agreement on the management of the Al-Hudaydah port, a resumption of talks, a lasting cessation of hostilities and the setting of the parameters for a political solution. The time is ripe for the implementation of the confidence-building measures identified by the Special Envoy, with a view to a sustainable, comprehensive and inclusive political agreement.

My third message is a matter of urgency. The quest for a political solution is not only essential but also urgent, while the humanitarian situation, already disastrous, continues to deteriorate. Only a political solution will make it possible to put a lasting end to the suffering of the Yemeni people. Such a solution will require resolute and unanimous support from the members of the Security Council for the efforts of Mr. Griffiths — support that is in place — but it will also require, in more proactive terms, coherent messages from us collectively to the parties to the conflict and regional actors alike.

At the moment, the population of Yemen is surviving only thanks to the extraordinary efforts undertaken by the United Nations and humanitarian actors on the ground, whom I salute. We reiterate in the strongest terms: it is imperative that international humanitarian law and human rights law be respected. In that regard, swift and unimpeded humanitarian access must be guaranteed to populations in need. Those obligations, it must be hammered home, are incumbent upon all.

That is the spirit in which France will continue to strive towards the goals I have just recalled, sparing no effort as we work with all the relevant actors to those ends.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I can be quite brief. I will not repeat our longstanding and well known positions on the broader humanitarian and political situation. However, I wanted to take the floor to express our appreciation to Martin Griffiths for his briefing and, more important, for the very determined and energetic efforts he is making in Geneva.

Despite the challenges and temporary setbacks, I think it is important to echo what he was saying: things are difficult; it is understandable that there are challenges after years of conflict and distrust. We are encouraged by the launch of the consultations and the steps taken in Geneva. The discussion with the Government in Yemen on vital confidence-building measures related to Sana'a airport, medical flights, the release of prisoners and the economy is one such promising step. We therefore commend the Government for its constructive engagement.

We join others in welcoming the active participation of the technical advisory group of Yemeni women.

It is regrettable that the Houthis did not make it to Geneva — an opportunity that they should have seized. Nevertheless, we are happy to note the Special Envoy's assessment that there is willingness to take the political process forward, and we strongly urge the parties to engage. We support the approach outlined by Mr. Griffiths today for moving forward by travelling to Sana'a and the region to continue the political consultations building on the discussions in Geneva.

However, now more than ever, it is crucial that the emphasis remain on the political track. With that in mind, we are concerned about the rocket attacks against

Saudi Arabia, the latest escalation in Al-Hudaydah, reports of intensified clashes and air strikes, as well as of the unrest in the South. Again, all of that results in unacceptable levels of civilian casualties. We therefore once again remind the parties that a full-scale escalation in Al-Hudaydah would aggravate the humanitarian disaster even further and risk hundreds of thousands of lives, while clearly undermining the political process. Yemen's ports, including those at Al-Hudaydah and Saleef, must remain open and functioning to allow for unhindered humanitarian and commercial imports.

Now is the time for the Security Council and the broader international community to renew our support for the United Nations Special Envoy and to call on the parties to de-escalate, respect international humanitarian law, ensure accountability and engage in an inclusive United Nations-led political process without preconditions. If we could express that through a press statement or something of the like, as suggested by my British colleague, we would be in favour.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful to you, Madam President, for having organized this meeting, and to Mr. Griffiths for his important briefing. We wish to commend and support the efforts of the Special Envoy in the pursuit of lasting peace in Yemen. We agree with him that, despite the difficulties, common ground exists around which Yemenis could converge towards a peaceful solution. That is something that we could not say at the beginning of this year.

We are concerned that it was not possible for the Geneva consultations to proceed as planned due to the absence of the Houthi delegation. We view that as a setback that must be overcome. But under no circumstances should that setback be interpreted as justification for an escalation of fighting. We must bear in mind the responsibility to prevent any exacerbation of the situation, which already constitutes the worst humanitarian crisis in the world today. On the contrary, the complexity of the context and the mistrust and distance between the parties are such that we should step up our efforts to get them at last around the negotiating table without preconditions.

Against that backdrop, we must record our concern at the upsurge in violence seen in recent days and its cost in humanitarian terms. It is our responsibility to protect the civilian population, in accordance with international humanitarian law. We stress that there can be no recurrence of, or impunity for, atrocities against the civilian population such as those observed last month, including the attack that claimed the lives of dozens of children, as well as terrorism and indiscriminate attacks against the territory of Saudi Arabia.

I conclude by reaffirming Peru's commitment to achieving a lasting peace in Yemen that ends the humanitarian disaster, fosters regional stability and ensures accountability for the atrocity crimes that have been committed.

Mrs. Cordova Soria (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the briefing provided by the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Yemen, Mr. Martin Griffiths. We take this opportunity to convey to him our full support in his duties and in his tireless efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Yemen.

We took note of the outcome of the consultations held in Geneva under the auspices of the United Nations, despite the fact that all the interested parties were not present. Nonetheless, we recognize the full validity and legitimacy of the process of consultations and dialogue as the only way to advance the political negotiation process towards a peaceful solution to the situation in Yemen. In that regard, we call on the relevant parties and actors to constructively participate in and contribute to the process of dialogue and avoid confrontational and violent rhetoric.

As the Special Envoy noted, there is undoubtedly a real need to work on confidence-building measures to bring the parties closer together, and dialogue must be stepped up on key issues, such as the opening of routes and roads to enhance the deployment of humanitarian and medical assistance, the permanent reopening of the Sana'a airport and, above all, the de-escalation of the conflict zones, which includes stability and full operations at the port of Al-Hudaydah.

Also, it is important to reiterate to the parties that any attack or military campaign that targets civilians or public spaces, housing or medical and educational health centres, as well as the launching of missiles and the deployment of antipersonnel mines, is contrary to international law and international humanitarian law. We therefore we call on them to observe the fundamental principles and rules of distinction, proportionality and precaution in the military campaigns that they carry out, while avoiding causing unnecessary suffering to the civilian population, especially to women and children.

We reiterate again that there is no military or otherwise confrontational solution to the conflict in Yemen. For that reason, all the stakeholders and parties involved should cease violence and commit themselves to complying with the contents of the Council's presidential statements of 15 March 2018 (S/PRST/2018/5) and 15 June 2017 (S/PRST/2017/7) and fully implement the provisions of resolution 2216 (2015), while abandoning all preconditions for starting dialogue, stopping hostilities immediately and committing to establish a process of negotiation that allows for agreement on a political solution that satisfies the demands and aspirations of the Yemeni people against that backdrop of respecting their sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. In that regard, we recall the words of the Secretary-General on 13 April here in the Chamber:

> "There is only one pathway to ending the Yemeni conflict and to addressing the humanitarian crisis: a negotiated political settlement through inclusive intra-Yemeni dialogue." (*S/PV.8231, p. 2*)

Finally, in order to achieve that objective, my delegation reiterates its utmost support for the mediation and dialogue efforts that the Special Envoy has initiated and continues to develop with the parties.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): I join others in expressing appreciation to Special Envoy Martin Griffiths for his clear and comprehensive update and efforts to bring about a political and humanitarian solution in Yemen. My delegation also welcomes the Permanent Representative of Yemen, His Excellency Ambassador Ahmad Bin Mubarak, to the Chamber.

Kazakhstan is closely following recent developments and would like to make the following two points today.

First, on the political track, we note the importance of continuing to strive towards sustainable peace, conflict prevention and resolution through political and diplomatic means, including confidence-building measures, as mentioned today by the Special Envoy and the Permanent Representative of Sweden, and which are also very important to us, as the country that created the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia, an organization for confidence-building measures in Asia. That would foster trust by bringing the parties together around the common goals of peace and development.

We are closely following the recent United Nations diplomatic efforts in Geneva, Sana'a and Riyadh, and soon in Muscat, to persuade the warring parties to return to the difficult but much-needed negotiations. Undoubtedly, the diplomatic moves led by the Special Envoy have helped Yemen a great deal, and Al-Hudaydah in particular. Kazakhstan supports the efforts of interested countries and parties to reach a political path through negotiations for a full and fair settlement, including at the political consultations in Geneva. Only such an approach could preserve the sovereignty, independence and unity of Yemen and realize the interests and aspirations of its people.

Secondly, with regard to the humanitarian dimension, we voice our support for the United Nations repeated calls on all parties to safeguard civilian lives, prevent deaths and injuries, allow the freedom of movement and protect hospitals, clinics and schools. That should be in accordance with relevant types of international law. We therefore note and welcome the coordinated efforts of the stakeholders — United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and the Gulf countries — to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Al-Hudaydah. Kazakhstan salutes the selfless work of the humanitarian partners who have been providing food, water, emergency kits, cash and health care. To our deep regret, 75 per cent of the Yemeni population still require protection from malnutrition, cholera and other diseases, which have killed or afflicted thousands of civilians, especially after a very hot summer season. Against that background, we express hope that critical health infrastructure, and in particular reproductive health centres, sanitation facilities and water plants and stations that supply water to the population, will be thoroughly protected.

Finally, Kazakhstan supports the Special Envoy and his able team, as well as their untiring efforts to reach an inclusive political solution, in close cooperation with the stakeholders concerned.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): Let me begin by thanking Mr. Griffiths for his comprehensive briefing.

We welcome the process of consultations with the parties to the conflict launched last week in Geneva, which we consider to be an important step towards relaunching a political process in Yemen. We commend the fact that essential confidence-building measures — including, among other things the release of prisoners, the reopening of the Sana'a

airport and economic issues — were discussed with the representatives of the Yemeni Government. We also welcome and are encouraged by the holding of consultations with a group of Yemeni women, and we commend the Special Envoy's efforts to ensure that the process is inclusive. However, while we regret that the representatives of Houthis were not present in Geneva, that should not be perceived as an obstacle for further advancement of political dialogue.

Reviving the political process, which would lead to a comprehensive and long-standing solution to the conflict, is of paramount importance and must be a priority for all stakeholders. Therefore, we expect the parties to redouble their efforts to achieve that goal. We urge them to continue to engage with Mr. Griffiths in good faith and without preconditions and to show greater flexibility toward his proposals. We look forward to the continuation of the consultations in Muscat and Sana'a.

Despite the progress achieved on the political track, the fighting in Yemen has become even more intense in the past few weeks. We are alarmed by the continued reports of attacks resulting in casualties among civilians. Poland condemns all indiscriminate attacks against the civilian population, which are in clear violation of international humanitarian law. We urge the parties to de-escalate and refrain from taking actions that would lead to increased violence. We urge the parties to abide by the principles of international humanitarian law, including the fundamental principles of proportionality and distinction in attack, and to ensure the protection of civilians. We also expect them to ensure that all Yemen's ports, including Al-Hudaydah, Saleef and Ras Isa, are open and fully operational, and that access for humanitarian deliveries across the whole country is guaranteed.

Let me conclude by reiterating that there can only be a political solution to the conflict in Yemen, and by once again expressing Poland's full support for Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and his efforts to bring about an inclusive political solution to that crisis.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to Yemen, Mr. Martin Griffiths, for his briefing. We underscore our support and confidence for his efforts. We also thank all the United Nations personnel who are working on the ground in Yemen, and we commend all their work and sacrifices.

We listened closely to the briefing by Mr. Griffiths on the United Nations efforts to hold intra-Yemeni consultations in Geneva, which regrettably have not materialized owing to the absence of the Houthis, despite conducive conditions being established for the holding of those consultations and all the attempts to overcome the impediments to their participation. The unrealized consultations provided an opportunity to distinguish between the party seeking a political solution, based on relevant Security Council resolutions, and the party that does not seek to achieve any progress in the political process in Yemen and obstructs international and regional efforts to reach a political solution, while perpetuating the crisis and exacerbating the humanitarian suffering of the brotherly Yemeni people, who seek a peaceful and stable life.

The absence of Houthis in the consultations demonstrates their indifference to the statements of the Security Council calling for consultations and urging all parties to participate constructively therein. Therefore, the Security Council has to shoulder its responsibilities and to insist on the full implementation of its resolutions, leading to security and stability in Yemen and giving priority to a political solution based on the three agreed terms of reference, namely, the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its implementation mechanism, the outcome of the national dialogue and the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2216 (2015).

The States of the coalition to support legitimacy in Yemen have proved once again their open support for the efforts of the United Nations and the Special Envoy through their announcements confirming their support for a political solution and the presence of their accredited ambassadors to Yemen at the Geneva consultations in order to participate in the briefings that were supposed to be given by Mr. Griffiths at the margin of those consultations. The States of the coalition also announced that they would grant flight permission to the aircraft that was supposed to transport the Houthi delegation to Geneva in order to participate in the consultations. In addition, they stopped their military operations in Al-Hudaydah in order to help the international efforts to promote the peace operation in Yemen.

In most of its outcomes, the Security Council has been persistent in asserting that the optimal solution to any dispute involves addressing its root causes. It is evident to everybody that the root cause of the conflict

is the September 2014 coup by the Houthis against the legitimate Government in Yemen. The Security Council must therefore work to shoulder the collective responsibility in fully implementing its resolutions and translating its words into deeds.

We reaffirm our support for the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, who has reiterated the wish of the international community to find a political solution to the crisis based on the aforementioned three terms of reference. That would end the humanitarian suffering of the brotherly Yemeni people and the threats to international and regional security posed by the Houthis, who continue to target the territories of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with ballistic missiles and to threaten the safety of the international maritime navigation in Bab Al-Mandab and the Red Sea.

In conclusion, we welcome the United Kingdom's intention to address the media.

Mr. Esono Mbengono (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, let me thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for requesting this meeting and the delegation of the United States for convening it. We are also grateful to Mr. Martin Griffiths for his excellent and enlightening briefing and his tireless work to achieve peace in Yemen.

In August, the delegation of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea expressed its support for the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen in holding consultations with the warring parties, on 6 September in Geneva, in order to initiate confidence-building measures for the peace process. In that regard, we support Mr. Griffiths efforts to oversee the consultations and for all that he has been able to achieve in his meetings with the Yemeni Government delegation, headed by the Yemeni Minister for Foreign Affairs. At the same time, we express our concern about the absence of the Houthi delegation at that very important meeting. For us, the Geneva conference represented an opportunity for the belligerent parties to initiate and support a new process that would not only help stop hostilities, but also pave the road towards facilitating negotiations leading to the parties' reconciliation and achieving lasting and sustainable peace in Yemen.

Equatorial Guinea is deeply concerned about the vulnerable situation of civilians in the nearly three-year conflict, with no immediate solution in sight, which clearly will prolong the suffering of the most vulnerable — the defenceless civilian population. My delegation therefore calls on all parties involved in the conflict — in keeping with the outcome of the meeting held in Geneva — to understand that a political process characterized by frank and inclusive dialogue, while respecting human rights, international humanitarian law and the relevant Security Council resolutions, is the only way to find a lasting solution to the crisis.

As the facts on the ground have repeatedly demonstrated, there is no military solution to the conflict. My delegation categorically condemns any form of violence that targets civilian populations. Conversely, we believe that civilians in need must be provided with access to humanitarian assistance.

In conclusion, we commend and are grateful for the work of the Security Council, which, despite the difficulties that it faces, ceaselessly continues to devise solutions to restore peace and stability in Yemen.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes the holding of this Security Council briefing to update us on the most recent developments in the Yemeni conflict, in particular the continued fighting between Government forces and the Houthi rebels, the political process for exiting the crisis and the humanitarian situation. My delegation thanks Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, for his excellent briefing.

Despite the calls of the international community for an immediate end to hostilities, fighting continues, in particular in the strategic port city of Al-Hudaydah, which since 8 September has been the theatre of violent clashes between pro-Government forces and Houthi rebels. According to corresponding reports from medical sources and hospitals, the toll includes 84 killed combatants, of whom 73 were Houthi rebels and 11 were members of pro-Government forces. Overall, the United Nations estimates that the conflict claimed 6,660 civilian victims from March 2015 to August 2018, although the levels of violence during the clashes and the sophisticated nature of the weapons and methods deployed by the belligerents would lead us to believe that the number of victims could be higher. With regard to the atrocities committed throughout Yemen since the beginning of the conflict in 2014, Côte d'Ivoire calls for those responsible for those acts to be held accountable and for all parties to respect international humanitarian law. My country also urges them to refrain from hindering the delivery of humanitarian aid in any way,

which, under international law, can be prosecuted before the relevant international competent courts.

In addition to the heavy toll caused by the clashes and their humanitarian consequences, the impasse of the Geneva talks between Houthis and Yemeni Government representatives is a source of great concern to Côte d'Ivoire. Hope for the resumption of dialogue among the Yemeni enemy brothers quickly faded owing to the absence of representatives of the rebel forces at the negotiations held on 6 September in Geneva. Despite that failure and the widespread pessimistic about the prospects for a rapid resumption of negotiations, my delegation believes that the United Nations must use every means at its disposal within the framework of preventive diplomacy to bring the parties to the conflict together to resume talks. To that end, my delegation encourages the work of Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and urges him to pursue his mediation and his good offices in his contact with Houthi and Yemeni Government representatives. We take this opportunity to call for a greater role in this effort to be played by regional actors, in particular regional organizations, in working harder to advance dialogue aimed at achieving a solution to the Yemeni crisis.

My country's faith in dialogue as the peaceful means of settling conflicts and the most effective tool of preventive diplomacy leads us to believe with firm conviction that there will be no lasting peace in Yemen without an inclusive political process. Côte d'Ivoire calls once again on the warring parties to lay down their weapons so as to establish an environment conducive to resuming talks, which is the only way to exit the current impasse and turn hopes for lasting peace into the reality dearly sought by millions of Yemenis.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the United Kingdom for convening today's meeting. We also thank Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, for his detailed briefing on the work with the parties to the Yemeni conflict, including within the framework of the latest consultations in Geneva. Russia supported and contributed to achieving the initiative of the Special Envoy and launching the negotiation process. We believe that this is very much needed and is a unique opportunity to end the bloody conflict.

We did not expect that it would be easy or perhaps even possible to move the Yemeni conflict to the political sphere. We believe that the process has been launched and must now be built upon. We pin our hopes on Mr. Griffiths convincing the parties that they need to continue the political process in the framework of shuttle diplomacy and to make them aware that a military solution is not viable and has no future. It is important that he maintain open channels of communication with all key players.

We consider that the support of his mediation mission, along with the absence of attacks and missile launches, will contribute to maintaining a calm situation around Al-Hudaydah. Everyone must demonstrate restraint and not try to resolve the situation by force. Developing confidence-building measures, including the release of prisoners and detainees is necessary. We would like to add that it is important to unify the efforts of all Yemenis in combating terrorism on the Arabian peninsula, which has taken on a threatening scale.

We believe that the potential for collective international support for the efforts of the Special Envoy has not been fully utilized. In our view, what is needed is an effective, balanced and focused format of support for the efforts of the United Nations. It is critical that the format operate on an integrated basis. We would like to underline that finding solutions to the Yemeni conflict will be an important contribution to stability in the entire subregion.

We wish to remind the Council of our proposals to launch — in the Persian Gulf and, in the long-run, in the whole Middle East — a process of developing a package of security- and confidence-building measures. That kind of architecture, in which all key countries of the region should participate, including the Persian Gulf States and Iran, would contribute not only to strengthening comprehensive and indivisible security in that part of the world, but also resolving long-standing and newer crisis situations, including the Yemeni conflict.

Threats and confrontations should cede place to dialogue to dialogue and cooperation. Russia will continue, in consultation with all interested parties, its efforts aimed at implementing the Russian concept of security and cooperation in the Persian Gulf. We believe that it is timely and necessary.

In conclusion, we call on all parties involved in the Yemeni conflict to actively participate in the mediation efforts of Mr. Griffiths. There is no military solution to the Yemeni crisis. For our part, we will continue to

support the work of the Special Envoy, alongside all of the parties to the Yemeni confrontation.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): We thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Martin Griffiths, for his briefing and we commend his tireless efforts to facilitate the relaunching of the intra-Yemeni dialogue. China regrets that the parties failed to seize the opportunity represented by the United Nations-sponsored Geneva consultations in Yemen, which were not held as planned. The Special Envoy indicated that he would remain engaged with various parties in Yemen in order to bring them back to the track of political dialogue. We commend his efforts.

Soon after taking office, the newly appointed Chinese Ambassador to Yemen went to Geneva to meet with the Special Envoy and other stakeholders, thereby demonstrating China's willingness to actively advance the political settlement process. China will continue to provide its constructive support to the Yemeni political process.

At present, the protracted conflict and worsening humanitarian situation profoundly impact regional peace, stability and security. The Yemeni people and the international community fully expect that the Yemeni issue can be restored to the political track. We hope that parties with influence will continue to push the Yemeni parties to demonstrate a spirit of reconciliation, narrow their differences and prevent the escalation of the conflict so as to achieve peace, security and stability in Yemen as soon as possible.

A political settlement is the only way to achieve lasting peace in Yemen. The international community should continue to support Yemen's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity. It should also support the good offices and efforts of the United Nations and the Special Envoy, push for the early resumption of intra-Yemeni dialogue and build a sustained political process on the basis of relevant Council resolutions, the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its implementation mechanism, and the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference in Yemen. An inclusive settlement can be reached through dialogue and reconciliation.

It is important to ensure unhindered humanitarian access. That is critical. The relevant parties should come together in order to ensure safe and unimpeded humanitarian assistance so as to create conditions conducive to alleviating humanitarian suffering in Yemen. China stands ready, alongside the international community, to support the Special Envoy in continuing his constructive role in moving forward the process to settle the Yemeni issue.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): We thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for requesting this meeting. We also thank Special Envoy Martin Griffiths for his briefing. We continue to support his tireless efforts to facilitate a political solution to the crisis in Yemen and we commend his diplomatic endeavours to relaunch the political process after two years.

We know that this will not be an easy task and we understand the difficulties encountered. Nevertheless, we agree with the Special Envoy that the Geneva consultations mark the beginning of the process and we encourage him to persist in his efforts. We commend the Yemeni Government for participating in the Geneva consultations and for engaging constructively with the Special Envoy on issues related to the peace process, and particularly on confidence-building measures.

On the other hand, it is regrettable that the Houthis did not attend the consultations. We understand that the Special Envoy will be meeting with the representatives of the Houthis in the coming days, and we hope they will demonstrate the political commitment necessary to meaningfully and constructively engage with the Special Envoy.

At this critical juncture, we believe that the Council should continue to support the Special Envoy as he makes every possible effort to fully restart the political process, which we believe is the only way to end the suffering of the Yemeni people and to address the legitimate security concerns of regional actors.

The President: I will now make a statement in my national capacity.

I thank Mr. Martin Griffiths for coming back to brief us. We obviously share his frustration that the Houthis did not show up in Geneva. He did everything he could to get them there. The Houthis should know that the members of the Security Council are not going to tolerate attempts to undermine the efforts of the United Nations. While Geneva did not work as we had hoped, it is urgent to find a way to bring the parties to the table. That is why we are here. We want to give Mr. Griffiths the strongest possible backing so that he can go back and tell everyone that they have got to commit to peace in Yemen.

The stakes on all sides are so high. It would be a mistake for the parties to dismiss the idea of peace talks and resort to military options. The temperature is rising across the region because of this war. Ballistic missile attacks into Saudi territory continue. There are threats to freedom of navigation in the Red Sea. Chaos in Yemen is spilling across its borders. We are potentially one missile strike away from a full-blown crisis. There is an alternative.

As we heard today, there is a remarkable degree of Security Council unity on Yemen. Everyone around the table wants to see diplomacy succeed. The parties must act to help the Yemeni people. They can do things right now that will actually make the Yemeni people better off instead of accelerating this humanitarian catastrophe. They can help the Yemeni people by finding a way to pay the salaries of teachers and allowing kids to go back to school, which is a step that any parent in this Chamber can immediately understand.

They can help by opening up access to medical flights so that ordinary Yemenis who desperately need medical treatment abroad for conditions like cancer or dialysis can get help. They can help by doing everything they can to avoid targeting civilians and civilian objects, and by holding accountable those responsible for civilian casualties. They can help by making sure that humanitarian aid and life-saving commercial goods reach Yemenis who need it through all of the country's ports, including Al-Hudaydah.

We know that Mr. Griffiths is working on many of those points, as well as others. We urge the parties to make rapid progress on getting those things done before convening for a new round of talks. There should be no question of the confidence the Security Council has in Martin Griffiths. We are losing time and patience. All sides would be wise to work with Martin and reach out to him immediately.

I now resume my functions as the President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Bin Mubarak (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate your country, Madam President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council this month and to wish the United States delegation every success. We also thank you for this opportunity to address the Council.

On this sad day for the friendly American people, we express our condolences to the American people and Government, as well as to the families of the victims of 11 September 2001 terrorist attack.

We would also like to commend the representative of the United Kingdom, Ambassador Karen Pierce, for her wise stewardship of the Council's work last month.

The delegation of Yemen went to the Geneva consultations in good faith on the date and place indicated, bringing with it the pain and hope of the Yemeni people for concrete progress that would reflect positively on their lives. At the invitation extended to us by Mr. Martin Griffiths to attend the consultations, His Excellency President Hadi Mansour was personally committed to ensuring that they were successful. He was in constant coordination with our team and with the Yemeni people with a view to reviving hopes for achieving the long-awaited peace.

The Government of Yemen has demonstrated and will continue to demonstrate its full support for the Special Envoy. We commend his efforts to ensure the progress of the peace process and his sincere attempts to bring together the Government's delegation with the party involved in the coup d'état after more than two years. We will be involved in all efforts aimed at reviving peace, restoring the State and putting an end to the coup d'état.

The Security Council has overseen that process with great care and attention. On the eve of the negotiations, the Council issued a press statement (SC/13484) in which it reiterated its call for the full implementation of its resolutions and statements, including resolution 2216 (2015). The Council also called on the parties to take advantage of this opportunity to ease tensions and participate fully, constructively and in good faith to build confidence and take the first step towards putting an end to the conflict, which has caused so much suffering for the Yemeni people.

The Houthis, on their side and with their well-known irresponsibility, did not attend to the talks. In fact, with a great deal of arrogance they exploited the interest and efforts of the international community to achieve peace in Yemen and avoid a military solution. That militia has an erroneous interpretation of some reports issued by certain international organizations.

I recall our letter to the Council dated 24 August, just a few days before the start of those negotiations,

regarding the meeting of the Head of the coup delegation with Hassan Nasrallah. We said that this would have a negative impact on the consultations and would demonstrate the extent to which the Houthis are linked to Iran and its proxies in the region. In fact, they are trying to establish an Iranian model in Yemen, which the Yemeni people and its leadership will never accept.

Before its delegation went to Geneva, the Government of my country underscored that it was necessary to prioritize confidence-building measures agreed upon during the Biel peace negotiations in 2015. Emphasis needed to be placed on the humanitarian aspects, including the release of prisoners and hostages, and on ensuring access to humanitarian aid without interference or obstacles. It was necessary to focus on measures that would strengthen the capacity of the Yemeni Central Bank in order to ease the suffering of the people and resume the payment of salaries. In fact, the Government made efforts and worked with the Office of the Special Envoy on all those points.

The Houthis have tried to impose preconditions to their participation at all stages of peace negotiations. They have tried to undermine the efforts of the Special Envoy by creating obstacles, in spite of all the flexibility and logistical support provided by the Office of the Special Envoy, as well as the coalition to restore legitimacy in Yemen. The coalition showed maximum restraint. In spite of that, missiles continue to be launched against populated Yemeni cities and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

It is regrettable that certain words are used to justify that kind of behaviour, which represents an evident challenge to the international community. Failure to describe what is happening accurately in Yemen will not help to resolve that crisis. What is happening, in fact, is not a dispute between parties to a conflict, as some have described, but a coup against a constitutionally legitimate Government elected by an overwhelming majority of Yemenis after a comprehensive political settlement followed by national dialogue. It is a coup d'état conducted by an ideological armed group that has nothing but arrogance and disdain for Yemenis and believes that it has a God-given right to govern. From the very first day of the coup d'état, that group has tried not only to overthrow the Government and even the whole State, but to undermine the very foundation of our country and change its national characteristics. It has been implementing ideology-driven sectarian programmes to change the common denominator that unites Yemenis and to destroy their social fabric and national pillars.

On behalf of my country's Government and the suffering mothers, children and the injured, and in the name of those who have been killed and the prisoners and detainees, I reiterate my call on the United Nations and the Security Council to assume direct responsibility and to implement their resolutions. It is essential to force that coup group to respect the will of the Yemeni people and the international community in order to achieve a lasting peace based on the three terms of reference, namely, the Gulf Initiative and its implementation mechanism, the outcome of the national dialogue and the resolutions of the Security Council, in particular resolution 2216 (2015).

This month marks the anniversary of the 26 September revolution, which the Yemenis supported in order to put an end to the sectarianism that dominated the country during the ruling of former imams. That rebel group is trying to revive the past, but I can assure members of the Council that this will never happen because we believe in the September and October revolutions and are ready to defend them, along with their ultimate goals that were written with the blood of Yemeni people.

Before concluding, I want to show those present a picture, which I believe to be more eloquent than a thousand words. The picture is of Abdel-Rahman Akram Atran, a 10-year old Yemeni child, who died two days ago after he was shot in the head. While he was playing, his football touched the leg of a Houthi leader by mistake. That Houthi leader simply took out his pistol and shot the child in the head. The incident happened in the city of Ibb in Yemen. The child is the son of a professor at Sana'a University. How long will the suffering continue to be inflicted on the children and women by the coup group, which defies the whole world and tries to impose the law of the jungle?

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list. I now invite the members of the Council to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.